Inspired by the past

A practical guide for cellists and other string players to the execution of Baroque music on modern instruments with special reference to the Six Suites for Solo Cello by J. S. Bach.

by

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This dissertation will explore cello technique through the ages with a view to providing a performer with a meaningful and accurate guide to the various techniques necessary to give stylistic and historically honest performances of Baroque music on a modern instrument.

For the purpose of this study, examples will be drawn from the Bach Cello Suites.[1] Bach wrote 6 *Suites a Violoncello solo senza Basso* in about 1720 and these remain the pinnacle of the unaccompanied cello repertoire today. These suites provide ideal concrete material which can be used in the analysis of very specific aspects such as bowing and its relation to phrasing, articulation and dynamic control, tempo and its effect on style and character, ornamentation, etc. The Bach Cello Suites range in technical difficulty from fairly simple to extremely taxing and this would mean that conclusions drawn from the various examples and/or experiments would be of benefit to amateurs, students and serious professionals alike.

The first two chapters will serve to define the Baroque cello and give a brief history of the cello through the ages. Today we have three categories of instruments on which Baroque music is readily played, namely: instruments from the Baroque era that have been restored to their former dimensions using original materials, modern copies of these instruments and purely modern instruments. The bulk of this work will concentrate on the differences between these instruments and their playing techniques with special instruction for the average cellist possessing only a modern instrument. It should however, never be forgotten that music making is an art form and as such has no absolutes. When one uses a particular technique, purely to satisfy the requirements of a particular performance practice, one risks losing the essence of the music itself.

Over the last 300 years there have been revolutionary developments in the construction of stringed instruments. These changes that are detailed in *Cello* (1994:208-268), by William Pleeth, regarded by many as one of the worlds greatest cello teachers of all time, and Stowell (2004:1-36) amongst others, were often inspired by developments in playing

[1] The various music examples that have been inserted into the text do not necessarily conform to any specific edition, but have been constructed by the author in a manner that best illustrates the point being made. In cases where an example has been copied directly from a specific edition, this will be noted as such.

technique, and have in many cases resulted in further developments in that field. The result is that we now have instruments and playing techniques that differ greatly from their Baroque counterparts.

A significant number of American and European string players possess a Baroque instrument or at least a Baroque bow in addition to their modern instrument so that they can engage in "authentic" Baroque performance practice. Most of us, however, only possess one modern instrument. Over the last 40 years or so, the "Baroque revival" has lead to much detailed research into the practice of playing Baroque instruments (Laird, 2004:xi). Although this has influenced many modern instrumentalists in their approach to performing Baroque music, very little exists in the way of specific instruction for string players with modern instruments who wish to give convincing yet stylistically acceptable performances of Baroque music. With the exception of a chapter in Pleeth (1994:135-145), the modern literature on cello playing contains, to my knowledge, no special instruction on the performance of Baroque music; while the literature dating from the Baroque time itself obviously only contains instruction specific to the instruments of the time. It should be noted that the Text Volume that accompanies the 2000 Bärenreiter edition of the Bach Cello Suites (Schwemer & Woodfull-Harris Ed, 2000) contains much useful information for the modern cellist interested in authentic Baroque interpretation, but it stops short of detailing technical explanation as to modern methods of execution.[1]

Recordings from the early 1900s to the late 1970s bear witness to many unsuccessful interpretations of the Bach Cello Suites. This can largely be attributed to a general lack of knowledge about Baroque performance practice. In recent times, however, in-depth study by musicologists and serious performers alike has revealed a wealth of information on this subject. Some modern cellists have chosen to ignore the developments in the field of Baroque performance research in favour of highly romantic interpretations of this music. Although these performances are considered musical by some, they employ only modern cello technique with little or no regard for interpreting the music in a manner consistent with the interpretation that the composer might have envisaged. Today we are fortunate to

[1] Various editions of the Bach Cello Suites will be referred to in this dissertation. For ease of reference, I will refer to the editor rather than a publisher if that editor is a famous cellist whose name is commonly used to identify the particular edition (eg. the Fournier edition). In the case of editions that cellists are familiar with that are not edited by a famous cellist, I will predominantly refer to the publisher rather than the editor (eg. the 2000 Bärenreiter edition).

be able to listen to fine recordings of historically-informed performances that have captured the hearts of discerning musicians and ordinary listeners alike. Recordings such as those by Heinrich Schiff and Yo-Yo Ma are clearly inspired by an in-depth knowledge of Baroque performance practice and a desire to use the modern cello as a tool to do justice to the vision of the composer. It is not my intention to analyze recordings of the Bach Suites, but inspiration can certainly be drawn from the mastery and understanding of such performances. One should endeavour to understand what these cellists have done from a technical point of view, to make their interpretations of Baroque music on modern instruments so cellistically convincing yet stylistically correct.

This work aims to provide a practical guide for *modern* cellists, drawing from the earliest manuals of instruction by Leopold Mozart, C.P.E Bach and others, but specifically detailing the techniques necessary to perform these compositions on modern instruments, maintaining musical integrity and stylistic character.

Although authentic performance practice is inspirational, the exact copying of it on a modern instrument is often unsuccessful. It is widely agreed that modern methods of execution can more accurately capture the essence of a Baroque composition performed on a modern instrument than simply applying the technique of what was a completely different instrument. In other words, the objective is to be as faithful as possible to the composers' intentions and to convey these in a manner consistent with effective recognized performance techniques for the instrument we are actually playing. In this way, one would truly be interpreting music for the sake of musical satisfaction and effective communication rather than simply mimicking an earlier style of playing that often does not convey the effect it intends to, because it is designed for a very different instrument.

In the words of William Pleeth (1994:2),

> "The spirit of the music is the only thing that can rightfully dictate physical action on the cello. 'Technique', in its fullest sense, means discovering and developing the physical means for bringing into existence a piece of music. Thus it follows that technique *per se* cannot exist apart from the music it is meant to serve. People who think in terms of 'studying technique' have made a very small world of technique. You cannot fully *learn* technique, you can only learn the basics of technique – *real* technique is something which only begins to take off when it is caught up in a creative musical idea."

.CHAPTER 2: DEVELOPMENT THROUGH THE AGES

The business of making, repairing and dealing in stringed instruments has been fraught with controversy and dishonesty since these instruments were first made and consequently many of the finer details of the history of stringed instruments is unclear today. Bowed stringed instruments can be traced back to around AD 900, whilst the oldest surviving cello was made by Andrea Amati in 1572 (Stowell, 2004:7). The only true Baroque string instrument known to be untouched by repairer or restorer is the "Messiah". This is a violin of rare beauty and perfection made by Antonio Stradivarius and finished in 1716. It is housed in the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford (Faber, 2004:1-2). As this instrument has been scrutinized by many scientists and historians, much has been learned about the mastery of Stradivarius. Stradivarius and the "Messiah", however, represent only one maker and one of many instruments; an in-depth understanding of even the very basic principles of violin making of the time would require the study of a far greater number makers and instruments. Because of their size, cellos from the Baroque period seem to have suffered even more than violins when it comes to shoddy repair, restoration and modification work.

Modifications were carried out on almost all violins, violas and cellos from about 1800 onwards (Faber, 2004:113-116). These modifications were largely due to increased technical demands by composers, which went hand in hand with the increased virtuosity and ability of players. Larger concert halls with greater audiences also demanded more power of tone.

Although some cello bodies were cut down in size to simply make them more manageable, the customary changes made to string instruments were largely restricted to the neck, fingerboard and fittings (i.e. bridge, tailpiece, etc.) A Baroque instrument had a neck that, when viewed from the side, appeared to protrude from the body of the instrument at approximately 90 degrees to the ribs. Between the fingerboard and the neck was a wedge, shaped much like a modern doorstop, which served to raise the wide end of the fingerboard making it more or less parallel to the strings. The development of playing

technique required more and more use of the higher positions. This was very awkward on a Baroque stringed instrument as the "doorstop" wedge resulted in a very thick neck in the higher positions. The solution, which is today standard on all modern string instruments, was to remove the neck and reshape the joint between the neck and the body of the instrument so that it could be fitted at an angle. Today the neck and the strings run more or less parallel to each other and the fingerboard is placed directly onto the neck without a wedge. This allows the player to run his or her left hand up the entire distance of the neck without having to compensate for an ever-increasing distance between neck and strings (Pleeth, 1994:261).

Another development specific to cellos is the invention of the flat, as opposed to curved, section of fingerboard under the length of the C string by another famous cellist Bernhard Romberg (1767-1841). As strings were developed to enable louder playing, specific problems with the C string started to emerge. It is low in pitch and therefore thicker than the other strings and as such vibrates wider than the other strings. This widely vibrating string often came into contact with the fingerboard creating unwanted buzzing and rattling. The flattened section of fingerboard now allows for a greater clearance between the fingerboard and the string (Stowell, 2004:14).

A crucial development specific to cellos was the invention around 1845 of the retractable end-pin by the famous cellist Adrien Servais (Stowell, 2004:14). Cellists traditionally cradled the bottom bout of the instrument in their calves whilst sitting down. Any modern cellist who tries this out will soon come to the conclusion that it is extremely uncomfortable for a number of reasons. Apart from getting severe cramps in the calves, the cellist experiences a decided lack of stability, especially when changing position. Experiments to support the cello on a little box or fixed wooden spike of some sort took place some years prior to the invention of the retractable endpin, but these measures were not nearly as effective as the latter for many reasons. These include problems in portability, the differences in heights of different players and the differences in heights of different chairs in different venues.

Other changes through the ages have been minor and apply only to the strings and fittings, viz. the tail-piece, bridge and end-pin. Although changes to these fittings have not had any specific correlation to developments in playing technique, they have had significant impact on the evolution of the modern cello sound. The rule that applies to all fittings is broadly that the lighter they are the better. Heavy fittings weigh down an instrument and reduce the possibility for all parts to vibrate freely. The more the vibrations are restricted, the more the resonance is restricted and ultimately the volume of the instrument is decreased. With the exception of the bridge, still made exclusively out of wood, the other fittings may be made of wood or out of a variety of synthetic materials such as carbon fibre and plastic (Stowell, 2004:8-14).

The earliest strings were made from gut, although lower strings overspun with some sort of metal were not uncommon by the end of the eighteenth century. Many players, however, used only plain gut strings well into the eighteenth century. Today strings are made of anything from gut to a variety of synthetic cores wound with metal for greater strength and ultimately a louder sound. There is a school of thought that suggests that in the Baroque period, all strings had an equal tension and that only the thickness varied for the different pitches. Modern "Baroque" strings seem largely to replicate the practice with modern synthetic strings, i.e. the thinner strings of higher pitch have a higher tension as well (Laird, 2004:36-37).

The development of strings through the ages went hand in hand with a rising in pitch in general. The pitch at which an instrument is tuned will affect its general tone quality. Baroque pitch was not set very specifically, but differed from region to region and even differed within a specific region depending on the type of music that was being played. Concert pitch was lower in the Baroque than it is today with concert A being around 415 Hz (Pleeth, 1994:263). Concert A is today defined as 440Hz or 442 Hz, but certain orchestras are known to tune as high as to 446 Hz specifically for the added brilliance of sound that this higher pitch gives.

The bow has a much longer history than the cello and still exists today as an instrument in its own right in some African cultures. It is from this primitive musical instrument that the bow developed as an essential component of a cellist's equipment. Early cello and violin bows from around 1500 were convex like a traditional archery bow. They had horse hair strung between the two ends of the stick which was kept in permanent tension. Violinists such as Corelli set the pace for the development of the bow in the Baroque era, while cellists seemed to be content with designs primarily intended for viol players. Cellists, however, eventually succumbed to the same pressures as violinists for greater volume and virtuosity, and, as a result, the primary design features of a modern violin and cello bow are the same. An important development around 1700 was the screw adjustment mechanism in the frog which allows the hair tension to be increased for playing, thus eliminating the need for players to taughten the hair by pressing it towards the stick with the thumb whilst playing. This also significantly reduces the strain that permanent tension would exert on all the individual parts of the bow and facilitates re-hairing. More importantly, the tension of the bow hair is severely influenced by humidity and the screw adjustment mechanism allows the ideal tension to be set regardless of the weather conditions. Another violinist, Wilhelm Cramer (1745-1799), developed the concave stick. This final major development was made possible as makers experimented with stronger varieties of wood together with improved designs of the frog and tip. Perhaps the most famous bow maker ever was the French craftsman, François Tourte (1747-1835). He is often credited as being the inventor of many of the finer details that have become typical characteristics of the modern bow (Stowell, 2004:28-30).

CHAPTER 3: DEFINING THE BAROQUE CELLO IN THE 21ST CENTURY

The necessity for the modern cellist to try to define a Baroque cello stems from the desire to have an in-depth understanding of the possibilities and also the limitations when it comes to the playing technique of the time. One can learn a lot about Baroque instruments by studying early instruction manuals on string playing.[1] The knowledge thus acquired should then be applied within the context of our age, present abilities and modern instruments, or, at the very least, serve as inspiration in our quest to do justice to the great masters such as J.S. Bach.

The problem, as explained by Laird (2004:xiv), is that the true Baroque cello is no longer with us. In fact, even the knowledge that would enable us to reconstruct such an instrument does not fully exist any more. From Faber's history of the great Cremonese violin makers that made up the Amati dynasty along with Stradivarius himself (2004:11-49), it is evident that skill and knowledge was passed from the great makers to their apprentices, often their own children, through hours of practical labour. Many of these apprentices in turn became the next generation of great masters. Although notes must have been made, violin makers did not learn their craft by studying written texts, neither did they pass on their knowledge by writing such texts. As instruments developed through the ages, they changed without leaving much evidence of their previous guises. To mention one case in point: Faber (2004:42) tells us that although the recipe for the Cremonese varnish seems to have been common knowledge at the time, there are no surviving records of it. It is probable that in such a competitive business, secrets of the trade would be guarded as they are today, and this could have been a reason for not writing it down. For reasons such as these, neither a Baroque cello in good original condition, nor a properly restored instrument from the Baroque era, nor a true modern replica exists. However, although we do not have the complete picture, in-depth study has revealed most of the defining characteristics of these instruments.

[1] The earliest one, exclusively devoted to the violin, is *The Gentleman's Diversion, or the Violin Explained* (London, 1693) by John Lenton (Stowell, 2001:19).

It needs to be understood that the Baroque cello had its origins in the bass instrument of the violin family often referred to as the bass violin or the bassetto. The violin family was well established by the end of the sixteenth century and this instrument differed significantly from the viola da gamba.[1] The bass violin was somewhat larger than a modern cello and therefore more difficult to play. For a gut string to have the necessary mass to produce the lowest notes of the bass violin, it needed to have a length in excess of the string length of a modern cello. In around 1660 the development of gut cores wound with metal made it possible for cellos to be conceived in a more manageable size (Laird, 2004:1-46).

Although we have very little knowledge of the ideal dimensions of the Baroque cello bass-bar[2] (Laird, 2004:20), the body of the cello has remained standard in shape and construction for the last 450 years or so (Pleeth, 1994:258). The actual size of the instrument was standardized around 1800 and many earlier instruments have since been cut down to size and in some rare cases, enlarged.

The known characteristics of the Baroque cello used in the lifetime of J.S. Bach can be summarized as follows:

- The bridge is lower than a modern bridge. The curvature of the top is flatter and there is no standard design feature except for some sort of hole (usually quite ornate) in the middle. The flatter bridge facilitates the playing of chords, whilst a more curved bridge allows for easier access to individual strings and thus favours the playing of single notes.
- The neck of the instrument protrudes from the body at an angle of about 90 degrees to the ribs and a wedge is inserted between the neck and fingerboard.
- Strings are gut.

[1] Apart from the differences in shape of the bodies and sound holes of the instruments, the viola da gamba has frets, whereas the cello does not. The viola da gamba normally has 6 strings as apposed to the cello's 4. Viola da gamba bow technique requires an underhand bow grip as opposed to the overhand grip, inspired by that of violinists, that became the norm for cellists during the eighteenth century (Laird, 2004:4).
[2] The bass-bar is a strip of wood, set parallel to the strings, against the inside of the table of a stringed instrument. It is situated on the bass side underneath the left foot of the bridge and is approximately three-quarters of the length of the table. Its function is to strengthen the table (Stowell, 2004:229).

- The tail gut is held by a wooden nut instead of the endpin.
- All fittings are wooden.

The elasticity, evenness, thickness and strength of strings are all factors which influence their sound and usability. A great deal of research has gone into each of these aspects through the ages. The use of wire or metal strings is a relatively recent development and as such cannot even be considered when talking about authentic Baroque practice. We can, however, consider modern strings that are made from a synthetic material, provided they are specifically developed to simulate the original gut strings.

The availability of funding is a major factor when deciding to modify an old instrument and bring it back to its original Baroque state. Some cellists are content with simply changing to wooden fittings, fitting a lower bridge and putting on gut strings. Other cellists will go for the costly option of refitting the neck at the original angle and others may even choose the even more expensive option of having the body of the instrument somewhat enlarged. As much of this modification is very costly and time consuming, many cellists have chosen to have a Baroque cello made from scratch.

In conclusion, it should be added that specialist Baroque performers usually have a very particular sound in mind and achieving this sound is more important than obtaining a specific instrument for this purpose (Laird, 2004:19-20). As a Baroque cello cannot be specifically defined, any cello, regardless of age, which has been set up with Baroque-type fittings and gut strings, will be considered a Baroque cello for the purposes of this dissertation.

CHAPTER 4: THE BAROQUE BOW GRIP

One of the primary considerations when trying to simulate a Baroque sound on a modern cello is the bow grip. Before discussing the advantages and disadvantages of the use of a Baroque bow grip applied to a modern bow, in order to better simulate Baroque articulation, some facts about the Baroque bow itself need to be understood. The lightness of articulation that many modern teachers, including myself, try to integrate into the playing style of students playing Baroque music, has nothing to do with commonly held perception that Baroque bows were lighter than our modern ones. This perception is in fact false.

Paul Laird (2004:46-51) discovered through research that the average mass of a Baroque bow is very similar to that of a modern one. The 48 Baroque bows that he studied varied in length from 66 to 77 cm with the playable hair length varying between 55 and 63 cm. A modern cello bow is around 71 cm long with a playable hair length of around 60cm. The lightest bow involved in the Laird study has a mass of 59 grams, but he points out that this would not have been a suitable cello bow as such a mass is more typical of a viola da gamba bow. He also refers to a bow, possibly designed for both cello and viola da gamba use that has a mass of 73 grams and states that this bow is heavy enough to be used on the cello. A 73 gram modern cello bow would be considered a normal light bow. The heaviest bow in the study had a mass of 91 grams. This would be considered very heavy, but normal, for a modern bow. In short, the form of the bow and mechanism for tightening the hair has developed since the Baroque time, but the lengths have only been standardized and the average mass has remained very similar.

Baroque bow grips that involve an underhand grip, particularly the so-called French orchestral grip that requires the player to hold the thumb against the hair (Laird, 2004:187), can be experimented with by players with modern bows, but I personally do not see much benefit to be derived from this. However, an overhand Baroque hold that simply transports the conventional modern hold away from the frog to the balancing point on the stick can be very revealing in terms of the type of articulation that the player

will naturally be able to execute. This method of holding the bow is described very clearly in Michel Corrette's violin method of 1741 (Schwemer & Woodfull-Harris, 2000:19). Modern players who choose to experiment with this grip should heed the advice of Leopold Mozart (1948[1756]:58) that an exaggerated gap between the first and second fingers will cause a stiffness in the hand and "bowing will become laboured and clumsy." The fingers should be equally spaced and the thumb should be opposite the index finger or even a little behind it.

It is my personal experience that practicing and not necessarily performing with a Baroque bow grip is extremely beneficial. The ideal place on the stick to hold the bow is achieved with a simple experiment. Balancing the bow on the index finger of the left hand will reveal the balancing point on the stick. The player can then use this point as an approximate position for the placing of the right thumb. The rest of the hand can simply assume a modern bow grip on the stick. The fact that the bow's mass is now equally distributed on either side of the hand, allows the player to hold the bow very lightly. As can be seen in the photos in Pleeth (1982:151), the thumb must remain bent and at ease all the time. The use of such a bow grip limits powerful playing considerably and the player is forced to use less bow, thereby heightening the sensitivity to the shorter separated strokes of the Baroque. Furthermore, the distribution of bow mass on either side of the hand, different to that obtained using a modern bow grip, makes a modern spiccato almost impossible. The stroke that naturally emanates from the attempted spiccato is less bouncy and slightly less articulate than the modern spiccato. This somewhat brushed stroke is ideal for the separate notes in the Prelude of Bach's Cello Suite no. 1, for example. The more central position of the hand with equally spaced fingers also minimizes the leverage that the modern grip gives. This limits our ability to make clear and strong attacks at the point, making the natural difference between the articulation of up- and down-bow strokes very evident.

The early music ensemble *Les Violons du Roy* from Quebec City is one of a few groupings in the world that takes this concept to the next level. They play on modern instruments, but use Baroque bows and the appropriate playing technique. Bernard

Labadie, their artistic director, largely agrees with those who say that Baroque music should be played on period instruments, but he also acknowledges the limitations of this practice. He feels that one can do justice to Baroque music with modern instruments and, moreover, playing on a modern instrument gives one the scope to perform all styles of music. A significant component of the Baroque sound comes from the bow and in particular the bow technique used (Chan, 1997). String players who focus on the Baroque bow grip and appropriate technique will go a long way to achieving a characteristic Baroque sound with or without a Baroque bow. Having heard *Les Violons du Roy* in concert, Paul Laird (2004:331-332), makes the observation that the effective reproduction of true Baroque style lies in the attitude of the performers rather than the possession of specialist equipment.

Pleeth (1982:150-152) advocates the use of the Baroque bow hold for beginners. He believes that despite (or possibly, because of) its limitations, it is a much more natural and less awkward bow grip than our modern one. He writes, "The hand in this hold is so beautifully positioned on the stick that it creates a perfectly balanced weight throughout the length of the bow during the life of the stroke. The position also encourages a continuity of flow in the arm movement so that the whole note, on either upbow or downbow, becomes a living substance." He points out that the modern bow makes different demands on a player than a Baroque bow does and this is obviously because it was designed for different playing techniques. In the pursuit of perfecting these modern techniques we have the tendency to ignore or forget the sound and feel of Baroque music. It is therefore important for all modern cellists, even if only occasionally, to experiment with a Baroque bow grip.

CHAPTER 5: THE LEFT HAND: BOWING, ARTICULATION AND DYNAMICS

5.1 Introduction

William Pleeth (1994:136-137) has remarked that the greatest shortcoming in twentieth-century cello technique is the fact that cellists have forgotten the beauty of Baroque phrasing, tone colour, and articulation. He maintains that cellists have severely limited themselves by focusing on the late-Romantic style of playing, despite the fact that our modern cellos are quite capable of effectively reproducing the colours and textures of earlier eras. He has likened this to a painter who discovers red for the first time and decides to only paint in this colour, ignoring all the colours that he knew before. Yo-Yo Ma, Heinrich Schiff and Niklaus Harnoncourt are widely acknowledged to be amongst the twenty-first century's foremost interpreters. It is my personal experience through observing their teaching that they not only agree with William Pleeth, but are actively correcting this problem through their teaching wherever they can.

The question of articulation cannot be separated from that of bowing when discussing music for stringed instruments. The practice of regularly and specifically prescribing bowing or other articulation markings such as staccato dots only began in the eighteenth century. Before this time and possibly well into the eighteenth century, performers were expected to have knowledge of musical styles and appropriate bowing styles. It was also extremely common for composers to write for themselves as performers, or to have a particular performer in mind for a specific composition. This would almost certainly eliminate the need for composers to write down every detail of musical expression. Although phrasing and bowing markings are, more often than not, one and the same in Baroque music, the problem of distinguishing between the two is sometimes evident in composers with limited knowledge of stringed instruments. This problem is not an issue when it comes to the music of J.S. Bach, because evidence suggests that Bach was well acquainted with many of these instruments. It is well documented that he played the violin. It was also at his request and to his specifications that a very large viola, played

between the knees like a cello, was constructed or perhaps reconstructed. This instrument is known today as the Viola Pomposa and may be the instrument for which the Sixth Cello Suite was written. Even more interesting is a catalogue of instruments that he listed as part of his estate. This list contains several stringed instruments including a Stainer violin, a violin of lesser quality, a piccolo violin, three violas, a bassettgen (small bass), two cellos, a viola da gamba and a lute (Badura-Skoda, 1993:146-147).

The four existing manuscripts of the Bach Cello Suites[1], as well as original manuscripts of his Sonatas and Partitas for solo violin, are marked quite heavily compared to many of his other works. It is therefore generally accepted that performers should not deviate substantially from the markings provided (Schwemer & Woodfull-Harris, 2000:20-21). In his *Essay on the Craft of Cello Playing* (2000), Christopher Bunting gives clear and simple instructions to the modern cellist regarding a variety of bow strokes. The vast majority of these bow strokes would not have existed in the eighteenth century, but they form the basis of every modern cellist's bow technique, and only need to be slightly modified for the playing of Baroque music in a manner which would be consistent with the composers' musical ideas. Bunting's work contains a complete analysis and explanation of modern bow technique with the exception of martelé.[2][3]

The vast capabilities of the modern cello and cellist now make it necessary for any conscientious cellist to consider and apply appropriate bowing technique to every piece he plays. No cellist would limit the expressive range of the Dvořák Cello Concerto to a sensitivity of bowing appropriate to music of the Baroque era, and no cellist should disrespect the subtleties of Baroque phrasing in the performance of a Bach suite, by

[1] Facsimiles of all four copies are included in the 2000 Bärenreiter edition of the music. They are in the handwriting of Anna Magdalena Bach, the second of Bach's wives, Peter Kellner (1705-1772), one of Bach's most important copyists and two unknown copyists. One of the unknown copyists is possibly Johan Christoph Westphal (1727-1799), a music dealer and organist in Hamburg. The latter two unnamed manuscripts will be referred to as UMS 1and UMS 2.

[2] Martelé, played on the string as opposed to off the string, can be described as a percussive bow stroke characterized by a sharp accent at the beginning of each stroke.

[3] It is discussed in Mantel (1975:211-215) and in Stowell (2004:232).

unconsciously abusing it with the full might of Romanic and modern[1] cello technique (Pleeth, 1994:142-144).

5.2 Separate bow strokes

The prelude to the Fourth Suite is an excellent example of separate bow strokes in a moderate tempo.

Ex. 1: Bach, Suite IV for Solo Cello, Prelude, bars 1-4.

According to various treatises of the time the notes should be clearly separated. Although each note would be clearly articulated, no notes would receive a hard accent. Because of the tempo the notes would not receive the customary bulging, detested by many modern performers, but rather, each note would begin with a soft accent and decay in sound, much like the natural decay that one hears when a bell is struck (Schwemer & Woodfull-Harris, 2000:21-22). In the eighteenth century, staccato and spiccato meant the same thing when referring to bow technique (Schwemer & Woodfull-Harris, 2000:23). While the modern spiccato is a technique specific to the modern bow and did not exist in the Baroque, it is an exciting and virtuoso method of bowing which can also be cleverly employed in Baroque music to simply enhance clarity, especially in the low register. A modern staccato, as opposed to spiccato, bowing could utilize the natural bounce of the modern bow, but it refers more to a separate and separated succession of notes. This can be done relatively slowly, but will not work if the tempo is too slow or too fast. According to all the treatise of the time, all passages that were not marked with slurs were played in this manner. It is therefore incorrect to use a modern détaché as described in Bunting (2000:29) to articulate these passages. It would be equivalent to a pianist

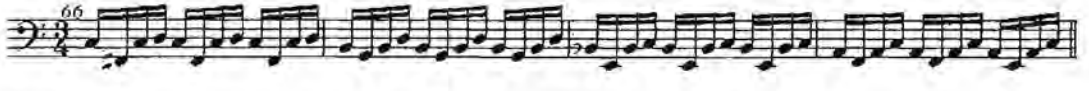
[1] One cannot speak of modern string technique without mentioning the Russian school, specifically because of the enormous influence it has had on string playing in general around the world. One only needs to listen to the great Russian cellist, Mistislav Rostropovitch, to identify the characteristic powerful and sustained sound that is typical of this school.

using a great deal of sustaining pedal in the performance of eighteenth-century harpsichord music on the piano.

If one acknowledges that, today, staccato does not necessarily mean short, but always means separated, the modern method of staccato can be used here effectively, provided great care is taken to avoid accents or percussive articulation of any kind. Employing this type of articulation will ensure that an appropriate tempo is chosen, also with regard to two other factors, namely the length of the movement as a whole and the rate at which the harmonies change.

One should guard against a too slow tempo for this movement, because the relative length of this prelude should not grossly exceed the length of the other movements. Although the preludes of all six cello suites may be a little longer than the other movements, a near perfect balance between all movement lengths is evident with the possible exception of Suite V, which has a prelude that is differently constructed to, and therefore longer than, all the other preludes. In the Prelude of Suite IV the implied chordal structure is one chord per two bars for the first eight bars and one chord per bar thereafter. A too slow tempo makes it very difficult for the listener to follow the chord progression. Establishing the correct tempo is also essential to making the correct articulation work.[1]

Consider the following passage from the prelude of the Third Suite:



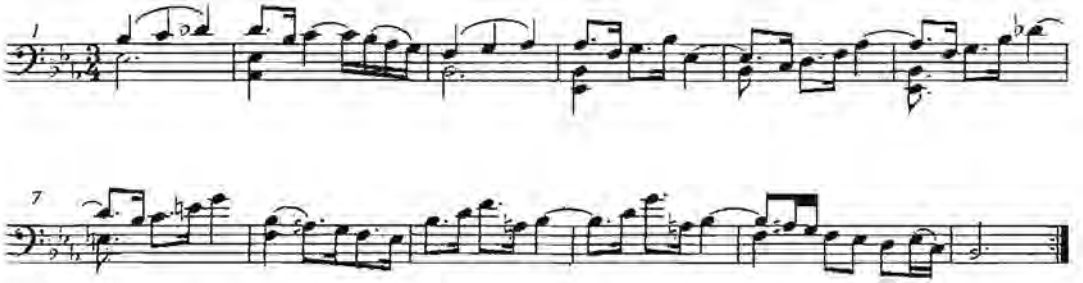
Ex. 2: Bach, Suite III for Solo Cello, Prelude, bars 66-69.

[1] This relationship between tempo, character and articulation is mentioned specifically in a letter from the young W.A. Mozart to his father in 1777. He refers to a lengthy discussion on the subject and concludes that it is the most important thing in music (Spaethling, 2000:81). Mozart was familiar with the work of J.S. Bach and held it in high esteem, particularly his fugal writing.

Although ex.2 can be played with some occasional slurring between pairs of notes which are adjacent in pitch, it is essentially an articulated passage. If one attempts this passage on a Baroque cello, one will, as a modern cellist, be surprised at the clarity that one gets in the low register as a result of the lesser tension of the strings. On a modern cello, at an approximate tempo of crotchet = 96, one would be able, using a normal staccato bowing, to achieve a relative clarity, except in this passage. Because of the high tension of the strings, the only way to articulate this passage with the same clarity as the rest of the movement would be to employ a light spiccato. This would then enable the articulation to remain consistent throughout the movement, provided the performer takes great care to come in and out of the spiccato passage without making any audible change to the stroke. Other passages which could benefit from a lightly articulated modern spiccato include the separately bowed passages of the Prelude of Suite I, the Courante and Gigue of Suite II, the Courante and Gigue of Suite III, the Gigue of Suite IV, the Gigue of Suite V and possibly the quaver sections of the Courante of Suite VI. It has been my experience in teaching these movements that the effective implementation of the modern spiccato in this music depends solely on two criteria, namely, the choice of a not too slow tempo so that this stroke can be executed effortlessly and the ability of the player to adapt this usually fast and very clear modern stroke into a somewhat slower and less active stroke. If the performer chooses a more moderate tempo, the modern spiccato will simply not work and a relaxed, separated bow stroke will suffice. It is interesting to note that, in the almost complete absence of any other tempo indications in the manuscripts of the Cello Suites, the Prelude of Suite III is marked *Presto* in the Kellner manuscript.

The articulation of a non-legato dotted rhythm would not have been exempt from the so-called "Down-Bow Rule" (Schwemer & Woodfull-Harris, 2000:22-23). This rule, when simplified, states that all strong beats, especially the first beat of a bar should be played with a down-bow and the weak beats should be played with an up-bow. A particular problem occurs in the sarabande, because the second beat of the bar is traditionally the strong beat. Although Leopold Mozart gives details in the bowing of passages with different groupings of dotted notes (Mozart, 1948[1756]:77), Baroque cellists must have had endless problems in correctly bowing ex.3, ex.4 and other similar passages.

Ex. 3: Bach, Suite III for Solo Cello, Sarabande, bars 1-4.



Ex. 4: Bach, Suite IV for Solo Cello, Sarabande, bars 1-12.

Where a bowing cannot be worked out according to the rules, an exception must be found, and this solution would in any age be a result of the combination of the musical sensibility and technical ability of the performer. Our modern technique includes the so-called hooked bowing that is prescribed for certain exercises in Bunting (2000:40). This bowing allows the modern performer to hook a note into the same bow as a previous note whilst still articulating it as if it were played with a separate bow. The second note in a hooked bowing is usually the shorter note in a dotted rhythm pair. This is made possible by the fact that the modern bow technique is based on the principle that all types of articulation, excluding off the string playing, are possible at any point on the bow (Bunting, 2000:38).

The ability of the modern cellist to make up-bows sound like down-bows, and the ability to articulate as separate within a slur, has obviated many of the bowing problems experienced by cellists in the Baroque time. This is however not necessarily a good thing, as so many of the typical Baroque nuances that come naturally when employing a Baroque bow and cello, are now regarded by modern cellists as limitations and, as such, are avoided or deliberately altered. It is important for the performer to acknowledge the completeness of the compositions of the great masters within the framework of the

musical language of the time. A nineteenth-century Romantic approach to the music of Bach is not expanding or improving on the original, but rather imposing limitations of another kind and therefore perverting the very spirit of the music (Pleeth, 1994:142-144).

5.3 Slurring

The subject of slurring in Baroque music in general, and in the Bach Cello Suites specifically, has been written about extensively, but very little in the line of specific rules on the subject has been established. The four manuscripts do not serve to clarify much, as they differ, sometimes drastically, especially on the issue of slurring.[1] Furthermore, it is understood that although these manuscripts are quite detailed, many aspects of Baroque performance, including slurring, were understood to be a natural and spontaneous ability of performers of the time and as such were not necessarily notated very precisely. The final decision when it comes to slurring lies with each individual performer and the manuscripts together with instructions of Leopold Mozart, Tartini, etc. can only give us guidelines. It is for these reasons that the 2000 Bärenreiter editors have chosen to publish an edition of the Cello Suites devoid of any slurring (Schwemer & Woodfull-Harris, 2000:25-33). In the text volume, the authors point out specifically that the absence of slurs in the printed music does not imply that everything should be played with separate strokes, but rather that the performer or teacher is now presented with enough explanation on the subject to work out the bowings himself.

Two general rules can be observed when it comes to slurring. Scale passages or passages where consecutive notes are adjacent in pitch can be slurred, but passages made up of notes that are far apart in pitch would be played detached (Schwemer & Woodfull-Harris, 2000:25-26). Leopold Mozart (1985 [1756]:123) gives us the basic information that slurs are denoted by the same sign we use today and that slurred notes should be played singingly in one uninterrupted bow stroke. Secondly, the notes within a slur should not be given equal emphasis. More often than not the beginning of a slur is somewhat stressed

[1] The Schwemer & Woodfull-Harris text volume included in the Bärenreiter edition details many of the differences in the slurring of the different manuscripts.

and the end, somewhat relaxed with the last note in the slur being the shortest and the softest. A typical feature of Baroque music would be slurred pairs of notes where the first note is stronger and longer, and the second, lighter, softer and shortened. This manner of phrasing stems from the inseparable link between oratory and musical performance that originates from the earliest days of music making. Quantz made the comparison between musical performance and the delivery of a speech. In his view, actors, poets and musicians share the same goal, which is to stir the soul by evoking the full spectrum of feelings. It is the duty of every performer to discover and communicate the true 'affect' of a piece of music. Animated speech is full of variation in pitch as well as a multitude of articulations and well timed pauses. The performance of vocal and instrumental music in the Baroque period was no different (Stowell, 2001:91-95).

Christopher Bunting's two volume *Essay on the Craft of Cello-Playing* (2000) is generally considered to be a good example of modern cello technique explained simply, but effectively. The sections of his work devoted to legato bowing, together with Chapter 6 in Pleeth (1994:44-59) emphasize one of the cornerstones of modern bowing, namely the ability of the modern cellist to articulate and, in particular, sustain a full and singing tone at any point on the bow. Furthermore, the modern cellist should be able to make down-bows and up-bows sound with equal tension throughout the length of the bow and smooth and almost imperceptible changes of bow direction must be mastered. Pleeth also has a lot to say about naturalness of phrasing and bowing.

Baroque bowing was largely governed by the nature of the bow itself and many of the typical Baroque phrasing nuances are perfectly suited to the natural characteristics of the Baroque bow. As these bows had very little real sustaining power, they were well suited to short separate strokes. Stronger and especially accented strokes would have had to have been played with a down-bow and the lighter and somewhat less articulated strokes that were left were well suited to the up-bow. As most strokes were by necessity somewhat separated from each other, true legato was only possible when slurring (Stowell, 2001:76-77). It is interesting to note that in his fifth chapter, Leopold Mozart (1985 [1756]:96-102) prescribes four specific exercises for good bow control. These all

have to do with varying bow speed and pressure within a single stroke so as to bring about the varying tone necessary in realizing the expression within a single slur or long note. It is only after dwelling on these four exercises that he offers the exercise of trying to produce an even tone throughout a single bow stroke and refers to this exercise as a "useful experiment...for the proper performance of a slow piece."

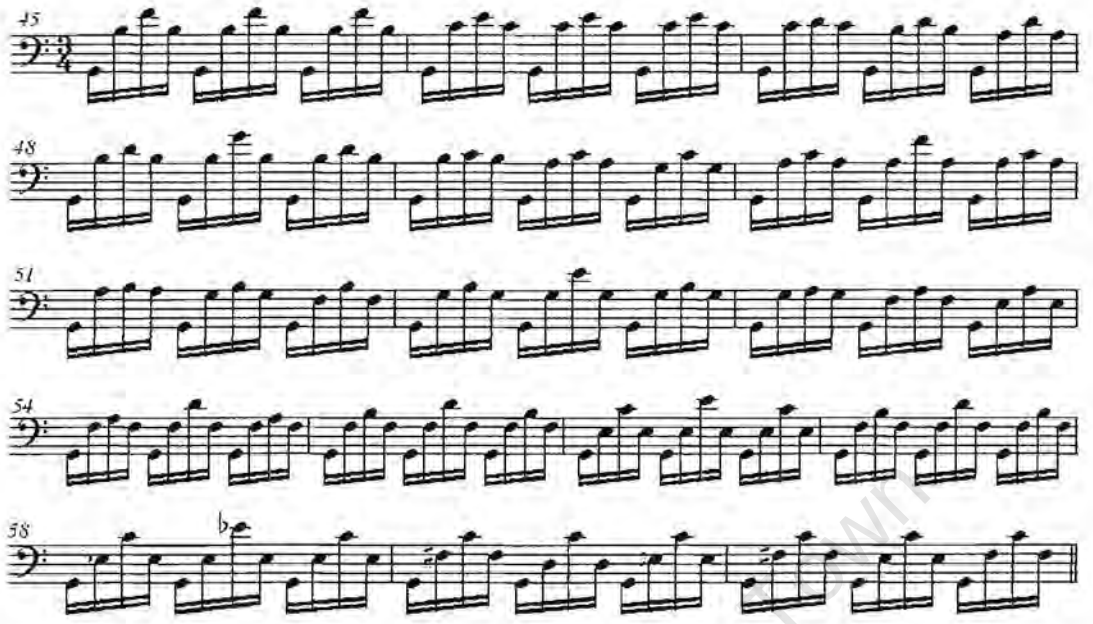
Most of the slurs in the Bach Cello Suites are short, with the obvious exception of the following:

Ex. 5: Bach, Suite IV for Solo Cello, Prelude, bars 49-51.

The editors of the Bärenreiter text volume clearly state that it is their considered opinion that all 38 notes should be played in one bow (Schwemer & Woodfull-Harris, 2000:31). In my experience, this is difficult, to the extent that it can be more detrimental than helpful to the sustaining of a long musical line. Modern bow technique as outlined above gives us the option to use two or more bows for this passage without making any audible breaks. This not only serves the music well, but gives the performer much more freedom in his or her choice of tempo in what is essentially an improvisatory type passage, and which should therefore not be restricted to a tempo governed by technical constraints.

Although most of the short slurs throughout the various movements of the cello suites are easy to articulate in a true Baroque manner, difficulties occur with certain passages, especially those that employ an intricate combination of slurs and separate notes.

Consider this seemingly uncomplicated passage from the Third Suite:



Ex. 6: Bach, Suite III for Solo Cello, Prelude, bars 45-60.

Most modern cellists have opted for the simple bowing solution of four notes to a bow, some starting on the bar-line and others, recognizing a melody in the upper notes, starting on the third semi-quaver in the bar. Although this seems to be the instruction for at least part of the passage in one of the manuscripts, it is the more intricate version of the first three notes of each group of four slurred followed by one separate, repeated over and over that is presented in the Anna Magdalena manuscript. The other two manuscripts do not concur exactly with Anna Magdalena, but are similar in that they also present a mixed bowing of slurs and separate notes. The Anna Magdalena bowing is very impractical and almost impossible to play cleanly and rhythmically, but it is definitely the bowing that best serves the music by giving this passage a pulsating rhythmic vitality. Modern bow technique again comes to the rescue with the option of two notes slurred and two notes separate, repeated over and over. This bowing is not especially modern in itself, but a modern execution (i.e. not phrasing off at the end of the slurred pair, but rather connecting it to the separate note directly after it), reproduces the aural effect of the Anna Magdalena bowing while avoiding its difficulties.

Although the "Down-Bow Rule" can easily be applied with equally good effect to performances on Baroque and modern instruments, it does not always need to be applied as rigorously in the modern context.

In terms of the guidelines that are generally accepted for slurring, it would not be incorrect to employ some slurring in this passage:

Ex. 7: Bach, Suite III for Solo Cello, Prelude, bars 1-2.

Although many editions prescribe a down-bow start followed by the first two semi-quavers slurred and the semi-quavers thereafter separate, it must be noted that all four manuscripts are devoid of any slurring here, and, in my opinion, it would detract from the noble character of the separate notes. Two down-bows (i.e. a re-take between the first and second notes) would be consistent with the "Down-Bow Rule", but this could restrict the length of the first note as well as potentially over accentuating the second note. Rearticulating the second note in the same down-bow used for the first note is, in my opinion, an unsatisfactory solution as the semi-quavers would begin too far from the frog, making it impossible to be consistent with the bow stroke throughout the movement as described for ex. 2. Modern bow technique, together with the qualities of the modern bow, provides a very simple solution. One can simply start with an up-bow and proceed with separate bows. All problems associated with slurring and re-taking can be avoided in this way and the performer only needs to take care that this first up-bow be assertive and well articulated to create the effect of a down-bow.

Although it is by no means the only solution, it is my personal experience that up-bow starts can also be effectively employed for the following beginnings:

Ex. 8: Bach, Suite I for Solo Cello, Sarabande, bars 1-2.

Ex. 9: Bach, Suite II for Solo Cello, Menuet II, bars 1-2.

Ex. 10: Bach, Suite III for Solo Cello, Bourée II, bars 1-2.

Ex. 11: Bach, Suite IV for Solo Cello, Sarabande, bars 1-4.

Ex. 12: Bach, Suite IV for Solo Cello, Bourée II, Bar 1.

Similarly, if one chooses to slur the first two notes of the Bourée II from Suite III, thereby creating an upbeat that can be played with one bow stroke, one could effectively start with a down-bow even though the "Down-Bow Rule" would clearly indicate that this upbeat, and indeed all upbeats, should be played with an up-bow.

It should be noted that the chord on the second beat of bar 1 in ex.8 is subject to the arpeggiated chord treatment as discussed under 5.4 and the lower notes will therefore not be held for their full value. This means that the last note of the bar will be played alone

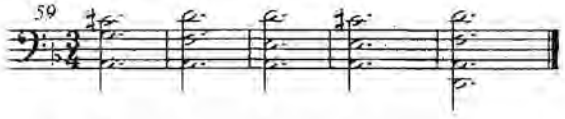
and can therefore be played up-bow without having an effect on the chord even though the chord is notated as a minim.

5.4 Chords

Despite the fact that neither Pleeth (1994), Bunting (2000) nor Mantel ([1972]1995) gives any specific information on the execution of chords, the standard modern method for playing chords is not only well known, but has, in my observation, become standard practice for the execution of chords in music from all periods. This method of breaking the chord (i.e. playing the two lowest notes together and then the two highest, regardless of whether the chord contains three or four notes) is strong and sonorous, but completely out of character with the general bowing style attributed to the Baroque.

Two methods of playing chords were possible with a Baroque bow and cello. One method, restricted to chords of three strings only, was to play all three strings simultaneously. This was made possible by the fact that the curvature of the Baroque bridge was somewhat less that the modern one and the tension of the bow hair was considerably less than in the concave Tourte design bow that only came into existence around 1800. The convex and straight bows illustrated in Stowell (2001:42-43) that were made between 1620 and 1770 would also have been far better suited to three-string chord playing than the concave bows that were made later were. Stowell (2001:81) cites a sonata by Leblanc (c.1767) in which the simultaneous striking of three strings is specifically asked for. This method can only be executed with considerable aggression on modern equipment and is therefore largely discounted as acceptable Baroque style for modern string players. The arpeggiated chord with adjacent notes overlapping and played with a single sweeping stroke seems not only to have been the preferred method of the day, but is a method that we can easily emulate today with our modern equipment. (Stowell, 2001:81-82).

The chords notated at the end of the Prelude of Suite II need special mention:



Ex. 13: Bach, Suite II for Solo Cello, Prelude, bars 59-63.

It seems most likely that these chords, with the exception of the last, conform to an accepted shorthand of the day and that it is intended that the performer continue with a similar semi-quaver melodic pattern as in the bars preceding the chords, using predominantly the notes of the chords provided. Further evidence for this school of thought is found in the UMS 2 where all these chords except for the final chord have a semi-quaver rhythm indicated by means of two slashes through the stems of the chords. The last chord is preceded by a wavy, vertical line and has no slashes through the stem (Schwemer & Woodfull-Harris, 2000:40).

Certain chords in Suites V and VI are, strictly speaking, unplayable without either the scordatura or the five-stringed instrument for which Bach intended them. An obvious solution for a performer on a modern cello would be to leave out one or more notes of any particular chord. However if one is arpeggiating the chords in an assimilated Baroque manner, it is entirely possible, if one forgoes the overlap between two adjacent notes, to play the two notes on one string one after the other. This is in my opinion often more desirable that leaving notes out, even though that cannot be avoided in many cases, and is effective especially where the chord contains one or more open strings which will ring naturally, making the chord more sonorous, and compensating for notes in the chord that are played consecutively rather than simultaneously.

Ex. 14: Bach, Suite V for Solo Cello, Gavotte I, bar 11.

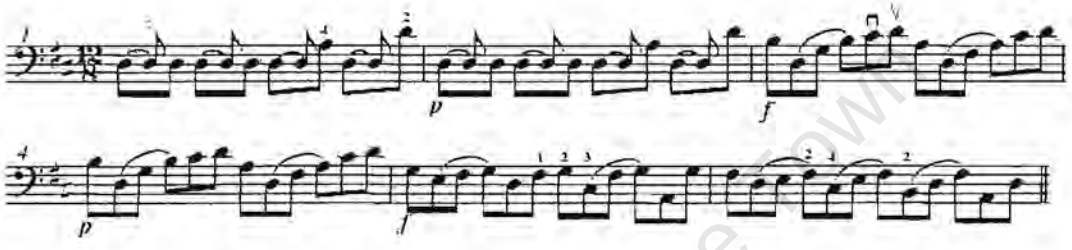
Ex. 15: Bach, Suite V for Solo Cello, Gavotte I, bar 32.

In both cases the D and the G in the chords which contain these notes would have to either both be played on the D string or one of the two notes left out. If one includes all the notes, the D will have to be played short on the D string leaving the top note together with the B flat or B at the end of the chord. This is, in my opinion, the lesser evil when considering the alternative of leaving out the D altogether.

The final decisions regarding bowing and the degree to which one chooses to be inspired by the research that has gone into authentic Baroque performance practice is a personal one. As the Bach Cello Suites are solo works, they offer the ideal vehicle for personal expression and, as such, are open to many different interpretations. It is therefore up to the individual performer to examine the treatises of the past and present as well as the available manuscripts in order to formulate his or her own ideas (Schwemer & Woodfull-Harris, 2000:33).

5.5 Dynamics

Bach almost never specifically prescribes dynamics in the Cello Suites, but the use thereof greatly expands the possibilities for personal expression. Although the other expressive devices such as vibrato and ornamentation have been included in a separate chapter dealing with left hand cello technique, the execution of dynamics is dealt with here, as it is primarily a matter of right hand cello technique.



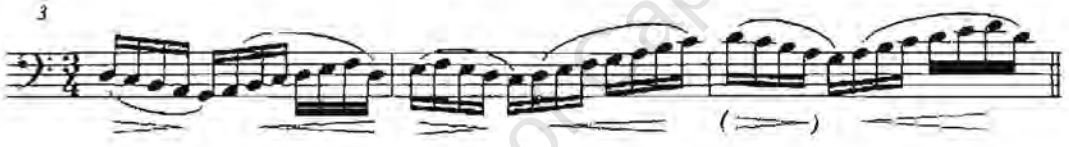
Ex. 16: Bach, Suite VI for Solo Cello, Prelude, bars 1-6.

The only dynamics actually notated in any of the 6 Bach Suites are those found in ex. 16 above. The Anna Magdalena manuscript contains only those dynamics marked above whereas the two unnamed manuscripts continue prescribing the echo idea for most of the movement. The Kellner manuscript contains no dynamics at all.

The practice of marking dynamics throughout a piece of music was not customary until the second half of the eighteenth century (Schwemer & Woodfull-Harris, 2000:39). The issue of dynamics therefore, is not so much related to the exceptional case shown in ex. 16, as to their integral role in phrasing. I have found no evidence to support the theory that instrumentalists other than harpsichordists only used terraced dynamics. In his instruction to cellists and other instrumentalists that perform the role of accompanying, Quantz (1966[1752]:274-277), likens piano and forte to different shadings and impresses upon the performer to observe such things. He also explores the possibilities of crescendo and diminuendo, and places particular importance on the relationship between dynamics

and balance in ensemble work. He also recommends the use of a lower dynamic level for repeated motives regardless of whether they occur at the same or at a different pitch to the original motive.

Although he does not elaborate on the matter, Apolin (1995:20) acknowledges the absence of prescribed dynamics in the Bach Suites, and explains that in accordance with informed Baroque performance practice, these need to be added to reflect the structure of the music. In my opinion, a convincing point of departure when deciding on dynamics for any given movement of a Bach suite is to simply follow the pitch contour of the music. In other words, an ascending scale, arpeggio or sequence should be played crescendo and descending material diminuendo. In ex. 17 below, the dynamics, with the exception of the decrescendo in brackets, are an exact replication of those found in the Fournier edition. This attitude to dynamics is reflected, to a greater or lesser extent, in almost all editions that contain dynamics.



Ex. 17: Bach, Suite III for Solo Cello, Prelude, bars 3-5.

In Chapter V of his treatise, Leopold Mozart (1948[1756]:96-102) puts considerable emphasis on how bow distribution, pressure and distance from the bridge can be combined in different ways and, in particular, how the varying of one or more of these variables gradually induces evenly graded crescendos or diminuendos. These instructions, although somewhat less detailed, are remarkably similar to those given 250 years later in Bunting (2000:31-37). The customary bulging on individual notes referred to in 5.2, is definitely not typical of modern bow technique as explained by Bunting (2000), but can easily be emulated by modern performers with modern equipment. Mozart (1948[1756]:97) encourages this practice by explaining that each note should begin and end with a pleasant softness and his first bow exercise shows a diagram of the

bow with strong tone prescribed in the middle of the bow and weak tone for the extremities. He goes on to prescribe as equally important, other exercises which make use of totally different dynamic fluctuations within one bow stroke. This shows us that the customary bulging on individual notes is indeed a typical Baroque treatment, but more importantly, it is only one possible treatment that is not necessarily applicable in every case. It is my opinion that such bulging can be effective in places, but it should always be secondary to a longer musical line.

It is important to note that our modern instruments have far greater capabilities than their Baroque counterparts when it comes to the range of dynamics. The use of extreme dynamic contrasts, far in excess of those possible in the Baroque time, is often very tempting when playing Baroque music. A modern set-up and steel strings make it possible to play the modern cello much more loudly than the maximum dynamic possible on a Baroque cello. The degree to which one exploits the upper end of the modern dynamic spectrum depends not only on the type of music one is playing, but also the prevailing acoustics, and it is for this reason that I believe that the enhanced capabilities of the modern cello can be used in certain venues in the performance of the Bach Suites, provided they are not coupled with Romantic characteristics such as excessive vibrato, portato and glissando so often used together with loud playing in a modern context. Although the Bach Suites give the performer carte blanche with regard to adding dynamics, we should not allow ourselves to be reckless, thereby disrespecting the musical language of the composer and the time (Pleeth, 1994:141-142).

CHAPTER 6: THE LEFT HAND: FINGERING, EMBELLISHMENTS AND VIBRATO

6.1 Introduction

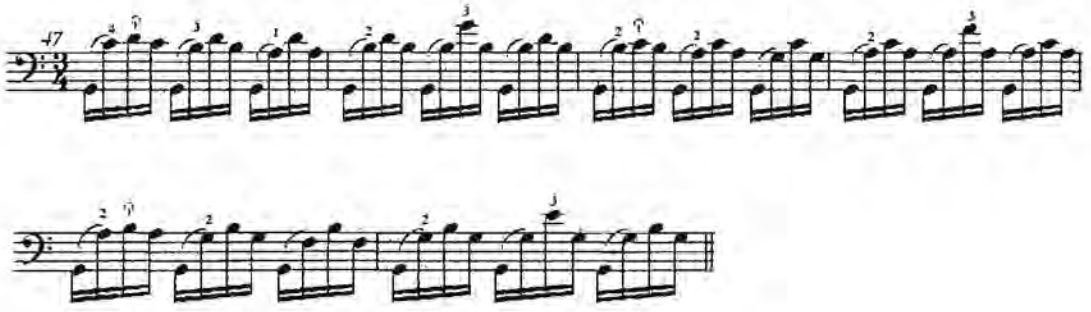
Whereas bowing, articulation and dynamics pertain to right hand cello technique, fingering, embellishments, and vibrato, pertain to the left hand. Although the left hand and its basic function as related to cello technique has not changed, there have been some developments in left hand positioning, technique and, in particular, fingering systems. These have been largely to facilitate the ever-increasing demands of growing virtuosity and the need to deal effectively with the characteristics of the high tension steel strings that are now commonly in use. Fingering systems have been standardized rather than significantly changed. The use of embellishments and/or vibrato is largely a matter of personal expression as, more often than not, they were used freely without any specific instruction in the music. The degree to which this personal expression was governed by the accepted performance practice, limitations of technique, and instruments of the Baroque period cannot be compared to the degree to which bowing and its related issues have been governed by the self-same criteria. The bow and its usage have developed considerably through the ages, but the function and capabilities of the left hand have essentially remained the same. It is for this reason that much of what is effective in terms of embellishments in Baroque music today is identical to what was required in the Baroque period itself. It stands to reason therefore that we need make little more than a thorough study of ornamentation in the Baroque and apply these ornaments directly to our modern performances, i.e. there is almost no need to examine different or modified ways of executing these ornaments.

6.2 Fingering

Cellists in the early eighteenth century employed two different systems for the first four positions, i.e. the neck positions. One system, similar to that used by violinists, employed consecutive fingers for scale passages regardless of whether the intervals were whole

tones or semi-tones. In some cases, when using this system, one could leave out a finger when playing a whole tone in order to avoid an unmanageable stretch in the first and second positions. Third and fourth positions were often compressed into one position, using stretches mostly between the first and second fingers. The second system used semi-tones between adjacent fingers in the first four positions as we do today. The notes above the fourth position were played with either the first, second or third finger. Before the 1820s, thumb position was only occasionally used, but without extending beyond the compass of an octave on two adjacent strings (Stowell, 2004:184-188). It is my personal view that cellists with large hands have only benefited marginally from the present fingering system and those with small hands have benefited only slightly more. In fact, cellists with large hands stand to benefit substantially if they can execute, with a good intonation, the stretches used in the first of the old systems. This is because stretching minimizes the need for shifting, thereby helping to eliminate audible shifts (i.e. glissandos) that are uncharacteristic and therefore undesirable in the performance of Baroque music.

There is no evidence of thumb position being in use at the time (c.1720) Bach wrote the Cello Suites; the first recorded description of it can be found in a treatise by Michel Corrette in 1741 (Schwemer & Woodfull-Harris, 2000:18). One cannot, however, discount the degree to which thumb position may have been in use around this time and evidence of virtuoso cello writing that clearly shows an advanced use of thumb position dates back to the early 1730s (Pleeth, 1994:242-243). With the obvious exception of the Sixth Suite as played on a normal four-string cello, the use of thumb position can be completely avoided in the performance of the Bach Cello Suites. The modern thumb position as described in Mantel (1995[1972]:80-83) can, however, significantly facilitate the following two passages:



Ex. 18: Bach, Suite III for Solo Cello, Prelude, bars 47-52

Ex. 19: Bach, Suite IV for Solo Cello, Bourée, bar 5.

Fingerings such as these are recommended in many modern editions. These fingerings do not sound unstylistic within the context of a Baroque interpretation on a modern cello as they neither require any use of glissando, nor any playing above the fourth position on a string lower than the A string. Evidence for the theory that Baroque string players played in as low a position as possible, therefore using more open strings that a performer might today, can be found in the Fifth Suite. This suite, if played according to the instructions contained in all manuscripts, excluding the one by Kellner, requires that the A string be tuned a tone down (i.e. to G). All material intended to be played on the top string is therefore notated a tone higher than it sounds.[1] Almost every pitch above the upper open G string is clearly notated to be played on that string, rather than in a higher position on the D string, but there are exceptions. These show us that, although performance practice of the time dictated that the vast majority of notes were intended to be played on the highest string possible, Bach also gave careful consideration to the few places where retaining the timbre of the D string was preferable to going over to the A string, despite the fact that it was customary to play certain notes on the A string. That many modern

[1] This practice, called scordatura, is not common, but can be found in other works, most notably the violin sonatas of Heinrich von Biber (1644-1704).

cellists choose to perform this suite with standard tuning does not in any way contradict the evidence presented. However, it must be noted that some of the chords are impossible to play with the standard tuning and no performance with standard tuning can quite capture the dark overtones to which the scordatura gives rise.

6.3 Embellishments

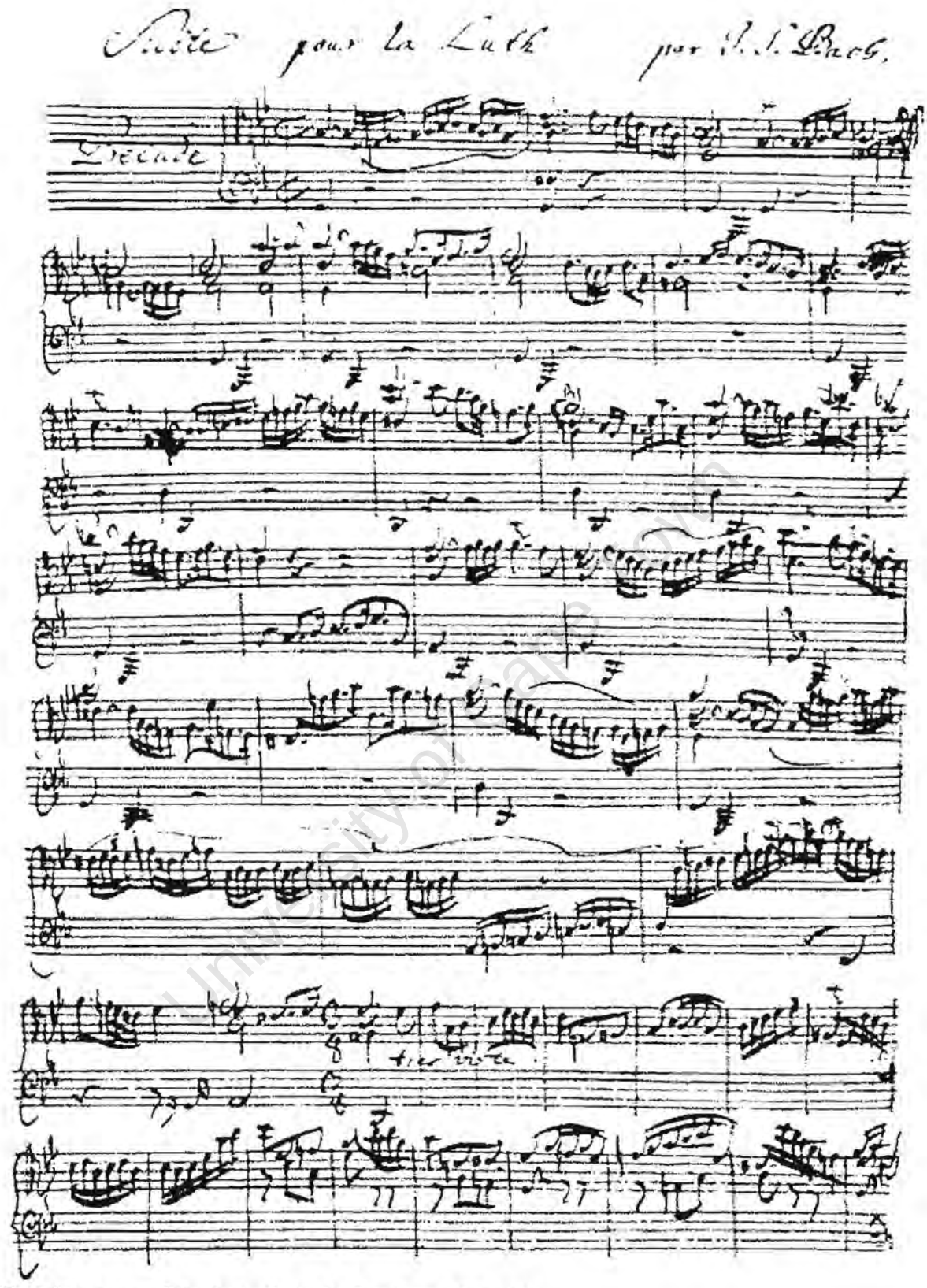
C.P.E. Bach (1974 [1753]: 79-146) outlines the appoggiatura, the trill, the turn, the mordent, the compound appoggiatura, the slide, the snap and the elaboration or fermata as being the essential ornaments of the time and also gives instruction as to when and where they should be used.

Leopold Mozart (1948[1756]:209) also lists the battement, ribatutta, groppo, tirata, mezzo and cirulo, and states that, although these embellishments are rare, they can be used provided the performance does not become an uncontrollable mess, because the performer does not know what he is doing. Many of these ornaments, especially those listed in the opening paragraph and attributed to C.P.E. Bach, seem to be very specific to the keyboard music of the time. This may have something to do with one of C.P.E. Bach's principal motives for using embellishments and that is: to connect tones (C.P.E. Bach, 1974 [1753]:79), something that is largely unnecessary on the cello where tones can be sustained with ease. This could in my opinion also promote the argument that when comparing the sonority of period and modern instruments, today's performances of the Bach Cello Suites on modern cellos could still satisfy the basic interpretative ideals of the composer, whilst using even fewer ornaments than would have been used in Bach's day as the modern cello has an even greater ability to connect tones than the Baroque cello. Bach's keyboard music is highly embellished in print and his own fully realized versions of the Sarabandes in the English Suites BWV 807 and BWV 808 that are printed directly after the conventional versions (Henle, 1971: 33-34 & 50-51) bear testimony not only to his attention to detail, but also to the degree to which additional embellishment

was customary in performance of these works.[1] The Cello Suites, on the other hand, contain far fewer ornaments, possibly because of the nature of the instrument, and this may well indicate the need for a somewhat more reserved approach to ornamentation.

The four existing manuscripts of the Bach Cello Suites contain relatively few embellishments, and not all cellists agree on the extent to which one should add one's own embellishments. Prof Stanislav Apolin writes in his Essay, *Synopsis of Baroque Rules for Correct Stylistic Performance of J.S. Bach's Suites for Solo Violoncello BWV 1007-1012* (1995: 12) that Bach was very specific in indicating the ornamentation to be used, and that performers therefore should not add anything over and above that which appears in the music, except for trills, grace notes and the use of *inégal*. Although the manuscripts are largely quite similar to each other with regard to the placement of ornaments, they are not in Bach's own hand, and no definitive answers can be derived from any single manuscript where discrepancies between the manuscripts occur. Interesting insight into the issue of ornamentation can be found if one makes a study of Bach's manuscript of the Lute Suite in G minor BWV 995, of which the Fifth Cello Suite in C minor is an exact transcription.

[1] Bach's precise and detailed attention to ornamentation resulted in some very negative and often cited criticism from J.A. Scheibe, one of the leading music critics of the day but it must be borne in mind that, prior to this incident, Scheibe failed to pass an organ examination at which Bach was an examiner (Badura-Skoda, 1993:489-490).



Opening page of the Lute Suite in G minor BWV 995.

(www.wimmercello.com/bachlute.html)

In Bach's manuscript, the relatively slow opening section in 2/2 contains a number of ornaments, namely:

Bar 3: a trill or possibly an inverted mordent on the second beat
Bar 4: appoggiaturas on the first and second beats
Bar 9: a trill on the second beat
Bar 12: an appoggiatura on the first beat
Bar 13: an appoggiatura on the last quarter, possibly from below (difficult to decipher)
Bar 16: a trill on the second beat

The Anna Magdalena manuscript of the Fifth Suite contains none of these ornaments, with the exception of the two trills in bar 9 and 16 respectively. In addition it contains an uncharacteristic turn in the middle of bar 5. The Kellner manuscript contains only one ornament and that is the trill in bar 16. The other two manuscripts are almost identical to the Bach's manuscript in the placement of trills and appoggiaturas, but contain no ornaments in bar 3 and 5. One could possibly conclude that in the placing of ornaments, and possibly in the general writing as a whole, the two unknown copyists are truer to the Bach original than both Anna Magdalena and Kellner.

6.3.1 Trills

It is my personal opinion that far too many cellists employ a standard fast trill at every point at which a trill is required. In order to enhance the 'affect' of the music, the speed of the trill should more or less conform to the general speed of the music i.e. fast trills are inappropriate in slow movements. Furthermore, one needs to take into account the prevailing acoustical environment and the thickness of the individual strings when determining the ideal speed for a trill. These considerations were as valid in the Baroque era as they are now (Schwemer & Woodfull-Harris, 2000:34-35).

Four modern methods of producing the trill on the cello are detailed in Mantel (1995[1972]:91-93); they are summarized as follows:

1. By using the knuckle.
2. By using the wrist.
3. By rotation of the forearm.
4. By vibrato of the upper arm.

It is the skillful combination of these methods that will enable the performer to develop the means to produce a variety of different trills. It is the modern cellist's ability to combine the purely mechanical finger action with that of the whole arm (i.e. vibrato) that gives us the edge over our Baroque counterparts in producing the trill.

Leopold Mozart (1948[1756]:190) has very little to say about the physical action required to produce the trill, except that it is purely a finger action and much practice is needed to strengthen the fingers to the degree necessary to produce the different speeds of trills.

C.P.E. Bach (1974 [1753]: 99-112) deals with the trill extensively and although much of what is written is specific to keyboard execution, almost everything would be applicable to a string player as well. Perhaps the most important and, in my view, the only clear rule

regarding the trill is the rule that states that the trill must begin on the upper note.[1] Starting a Bach trill on the upper note is an accepted point of departure, but consideration needs to be given to harmonic and rhythmic circumstances that may validate the exception to the rule. Although almost all the notated trills in the Bach Cello Suites conform to the prerequisites for an upper note start, the modern cellist who chooses to add his or her own ornamentation in the Cello Suites or to appropriately embellish any other Bach cello music, should consider the context before applying the rule.

It is my personal experience that the application of this rule is easy and natural. In the following passage from the Prelude of Suite III, however, the unconventional left hand position required in the bar before the trill makes it easier to start the trill from the principal note.[2]

Ex. 20: Bach, Suite III for Solo Cello, Prelude, bar 85-88.

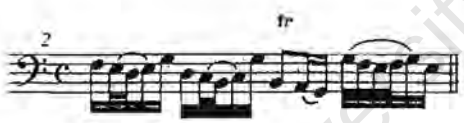
This is a purely technical consideration, but there are musical considerations that must be taken into account. Badura-Skoda (1993:422) uses this passage as an example of a trill that should *not* start on the upper note, as the trill sign is merely a continuation of a trill that is clearly notated from the main note in the previous bar. Furthermore, harmonic analysis reveals that the main note (B) in this instance is itself a dissonant non-chord note

[1] William Glock's edition of C.P.E. Bach's treatise (1974 [1753]:100), however, contains a footnote that reads, "It is safe to conclude that there is no form of Bach trill that starts on the principal note." Although the "Bach" referred to could be J.S. Bach or C.P.E. Bach, the added information given that this rule is a long-standing rule, indicates that it would certainly apply to the music of J.S. Bach specifically and also to all German Baroque composers. Stanislav Apolin (1995:12) also cites L. Mozart and Couperin in the application of this rule.

[2] The Kellner manuscript prescribes a double trill at this point, which may well be the implication in the other manuscripts as well. As a string player, Bach would have been aware of the technical difficulty involved in producing the double trill with the unconventional fingering necessary to do so. Even with today's wealth of fingering options, this is very awkward and the vast majority of modern cellists choose to use the single trill on the upper note of the double stop as indicated in the Anna Magdalena Bach manuscript and the other two manuscripts.

against the bass C (introduced at the beginning of bar 85 and implied as pedal point up to the end), while the upper note of the trill (C) would be consonant with the bass. In Baroque music, the start of the trill is designed (like the appoggiatura) to stress dissonance rather than consonance, and while this mostly means starting on the upper note, there are exceptions, such as ex. 20 above.[1] One should not lose sight of the fact that the adding of trills and other ornaments is a creative process that should be governed by good taste within the context of certain stylistic parameters and the blind application of rules does not always do justice to the flow of the music. Badura-Skoda (1993:420-425) also cites many examples of trills from Bach's music for other instruments that in his opinion should start on the main note. It is my personal experience that many instrumentalists, who are neither proficient as composers or keyboard players, lack the capacity for complicated harmonic analysis and I would advise communication with experts in the field of harmony to resolve matters of this nature on a case by case basis.

There are a number of places where the possibly untidy nature of Bach's own manuscript, now no longer in existence, has given rise to questions regarding the exact positioning of certain trills. Evidence for this can be found in discrepancies between the different existing manuscripts.



Ex. 21: Bach, Suite III for Solo Cello, Allemande, bar 2.

If one looks only at the second beat of this bar one will find the Anna Magdalena manuscript and the UMS 1 prescribing the trill on the A, whereas the Kellner manuscript together with the UMS 2 prescribes the trill on the B. As both versions sound quite

[1] Another exception occurs when the note preceding a trill acts as appoggiatura, therefore effectively replacing the upper note start. There are no clear instances of this in the Bach Cello Suites, but an interpreter could conceivably add a trill to the resolution of an appoggiatura in some places. The application of this principle means that the convention of playing the resolution in the same bow can be observed, as the start of the trill does not repeat the preceding note.

acceptable to today's listener and the placing of a trill on any particular note is often a subjective and personal matter for the performer, it would be presumptuous to offer only one version as correct. In this case, however, a trill on the chord note B would be more consistent with the majority of other clear examples taken from the Bach Cello Suites than a trill on the passing note A. For those who feel the need to examine all such discrepancies, a long list of discrepancies between the manuscripts, including discrepancies in notes and rhythms, etc, can be found in the Critical Report at the back of the 2000 Bärenreiter edition.

6.3.2 The Appoggiatura

Two forms of the appoggiatura were in use in the Baroque period, namely the long appoggiatura and the short appoggiatura. One did not differentiate between the two types by using any specific notation, but rather chose one or the other according to the context in which it was written. The long appoggiatura could take half or more of the value of the principal note to which it was attached and this type of appoggiatura was by far the more common type by the middle of the eighteenth century. It was used to beautify music that was in a moderate to slow tempo and had the function of enhancing the cantabile character. The short appoggiatura was reserved for fast tempi and added to the sprightly character of the music. The overwhelming majority of both these types of appoggiatura lie a second above the principal note. Although appoggiaturas from below were not uncommon, they were less frequent and considered by some composers to be different in function and less effective than the appoggiatura from above (Schwemer & Woodfull-Harris, 2000:35-37). It is interesting to note that C.P.E. Bach (1974 [1753]: 87) considered the Baroque notation of appoggiaturas to be too vague regarding their length and suggests that no appoggiatura should be notated without specifying its length.

The modern cellist will have no difficulty in executing any form of Baroque appoggiatura if he or she has a basic knowledge of the concept. The executing of the short appoggiatura will however benefit substantially from adopting a keen sense of left hand articulation with a particular sensitivity for the high tension of modern strings. The use of

a degree of left hand pizzicato whilst playing with the bow serves well in this regard (Bunting, 2000:33-36).

Schwemer & Woodfull-Harris (2000:37) points out that the principal manuscripts (i.e. those of Anna Magdalena Bach and Kellner) contain very few specifically notated appoggiaturas. The other manuscripts contain only somewhat more. One assumes that as with the trill, performers would have added appoggiaturas in accordance with performance practice of the time and their personal musical taste. One should also not forget that harmonic analysis of almost any piece of Baroque music will reveal many appoggiaturas that have simply been written out as normal melodic notes. In ex.22, both the E and the B can be considered appoggiaturas.

Ex. 22: Bach, Suite I for Solo Cello, Sarabande, bar 9.

Although it would not have been necessary to indicate an appoggiatura before a trill that was customarily started on the upper note anyway, this first note of the trill can, and in my opinion, should, also be treated as an appoggiatura, especially in expressive passages.

Whether the appoggiatura is implied, specifically notated or added by the performer, the following rules apply:

- Appoggiaturas are connected to the note immediately thereafter whether a slur is written or not.
- Appoggiaturas are louder than the principal note to which they are joined (C.P.E. Bach, 1974 [1753]:88).

Leopold Mozart (1948[1756]:171) also states these rules and includes some advice specific to string players: the appoggiatura should never be played with an open string. This advice conforms nicely with the prerequisites for later schools of cello playing, where open strings are completely avoided in such circumstances. Leopold Mozart

(1948[1756]:171) also warns against any accentuation of the main note, explaining that the appoggiatura must not only be louder, but can even contain an expressive swell, resolving softly on the main note with very smooth bowing.

With the exception of a few obvious trills, the four original manuscripts differ from each other in the placement of embellishments, especially appoggiaturas. The J.S. Bach manuscript of the Lute Suite BWV 995 is very clear in the placement of embellishments and whilst one obviously has to bear in mind that he wrote this version for a different instrument, it is the clearest guide to his personal choice concerning the placement of appoggiaturas and other embellishments for this specific piece of music.

6.3.3 The Turn

The turn is the only other significant embellishment in the Bach Cello Suites and occurs very seldom in comparison to the trills and appoggiaturas. The turn is prescribed exactly six times in total in the four manuscripts combined and no two manuscripts concur in the placing of such turns. This is an ornament that is easy to execute on the cello, but is far more prevalent in keyboard music (Schwemer & Woodfull-Harris, 2000:38).

6.3.4 *Inégal*

The conscious use of *inégal* had virtually become extinct by the end of the eighteenth century and has only recently been revived to a very limited extent. *Inégal*, or *inégalité*, as it is sometimes referred to, is a French custom that refers to the rhythmic manipulation of consecutive notes that are originally notated as even. It can also refer to the 'over-dotting' or 'double-dotting' of normal dotted rhythms. Schwemer & Woodfull-Harris (2000:12-14) detail the inclusion of many French variants of the various Baroque dance suite movements in the Bach Cello Suites and this is evidence of the influence of French style in German Baroque music. Badura-Skoda (1993:69), however, warns that even in music influenced by the French style, the use of *inégal* should be the exception rather than the rule. It results from the acknowledgment of the importance of certain notes over

others. Important notes were stressed and given additional length and less important notes were therefore played lighter and cut shorter in order to maintain the basic over-all metric stability. This may have been done consciously or unconsciously and in the case of string players, was a natural consequence of the prevailing bow technique. *Inégal* should be used sparingly and its use should bring charm to passages that are otherwise rhythmically uninteresting.[1] The exact notation of any *inégal* is impossible as there are too many factors, including the personal expression of the performer which could determine the degree to which notes are lengthened or shortened. *Inégal* should not be used for triplets, fast tempi, repeated notes of the same pitch, legato groups of notes (except groups of two and very occasionally, groups of four) and between large intervals (Apolin, 1995:14). Apolin (1995:14) sites the following examples as possible places for *inégal*:

Ex. 23: Bach, Suite II for Solo Cello, Allemande, bar 1.

Ex. 24: Bach, Suite II for Solo Cello, Menuet II, bars 1-3

The notation used above is a reproduction of Apolin's notation that is intended to distort the even notation used in the all four of the available manuscripts. Neither the staccato dots in the Allemande nor the dotted rhythm in the Menuet exist in any manuscript and as such are not to be taken literally, but only serve as an indication of the manner in which the rhythm is to be manipulated.

[1] Badura-Skoda, (1993:68-69) cites Quantz in justifying the use of *inégal*, but warns against anything more than very limited usage. He also questions the practice of always giving length to the stronger note in an *inégal* pair and claims that shortening the stronger note can also be an effective means of stressing it.

6.3.5 Improvisation

The most elaborate form of embellishment must surely be improvisation. Stowell (2001:21) cites Galeazzi's *Elementi teorico-practici di musica* (1791:II), as probably being the most valuable source of information on string improvisation at the time. The freely improvised cadenza commonly found towards the end of a movement of a Classical concerto is an elaboration of the Baroque treatment of fermatas. Fermatas were seen as an indication to performers to improvise a short and appropriate phrase ending, usually on the dominant chord. Although the Bach Cello Suites are very specific in their notation and as such do not present much opportunity for improvisation, the following examples represent such possibilities. It should be noted that the presence of the fermata does not imply compulsory elaboration, but rather indicates a point of closure or relaxation in the music where such elaboration is possible.

This could be elaborated as:

Ex. 25: Bach, Suite I for Solo Cello, Prelude, bar 22.

This could be elaborated as:

Ex. 26: Bach, Suite II for Solo Cello, Prelude, bar 47.

C.P.E Bach (1974 [1753]:143) also gives guidelines as to the appropriate elaboration of fermatas and invites those who are not gifted in the art of improvisation to simply play a long trill at such places. Elaborated fermatas should be fresh and should awaken a renewed interest in the listener.[1] Such elaborations should sound improvised even if they are worked out by the performer in advance. A performer should not embellish any fermata if it is placed over a rest.

Such free improvisation is usually not even considered as an option by modern cellists (except in the jazz idiom), but was supposedly the norm in Bach's day. In his detailed writing on cadenzas, Quantz (2001 [1752]:179-181.) gives us some insight into the origin and appropriate use of such free improvisation. Cadenzas or free embellishment at points where the bass or underlying harmony pauses momentarily became fashionable between 1710 and 1716 approximately, whereas the simple elaboration of fermatas is thought to have originated even earlier. Whereas Quantz encourages wind players to complete such cadenzas in one breath, a string player could make them as long as he likes, "if he is rich enough in inventiveness". He does, however, stress that such cadenzas should be kept to a minimum and that the opportunity to improvise freely should not be abused.

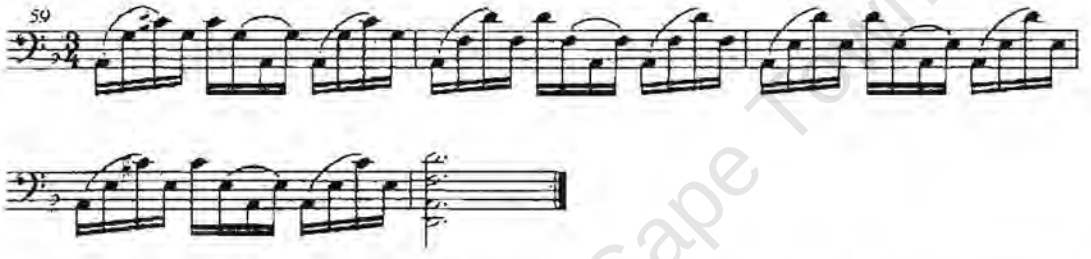
Another form of improvisation occurs where a basic chord structure is given and the performer is left to determine the exact figuration himself.[2]

Ex. 27: Bach, Suite II for Solo Cello, Prelude, bars 59-63.

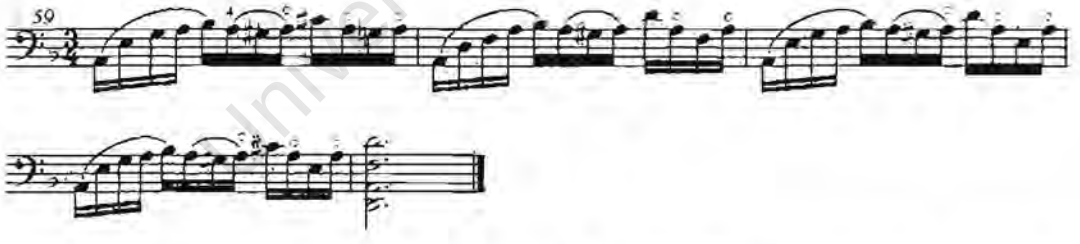
Leopold Mozart (1948[1756]:161) gives a strikingly similar example and points out that the style of execution is partially indicated by the composer and partly carried out according to the good taste of the performer. Although in recordings many great cellists

[1] Modern sensibilities would normally require that an elaboration be developed from the thematic material of the movement. Although this is not specified by C.P.E. Bach, he stipulates that elaborations be related to the affect of a movement (C.P.E Bach, 1974 [1753]:144).
[2] See also 5.4

from the 1950s-80s simply play the chords as written, the fact that the entire movement prior to this point is made up of running semi-quavers seems to indicate that a similar rhythmic pattern should prevail up to and including the penultimate bar. The first edition, published by Janet et Cotelle in Paris in or around 1824 contains the word "Arpegio" [sic.] in the fourth last bar which indicates that the arpeggiated figure in the previous bar should be continued. The UMS 2 indicates a semi-quaver rhythm for the fifth last to second last bar by means of two lines or slashes through the tails of each dotted minim. Apolin (1995:22) presents two realizations of this passage, one by Robert Hausmann (1852-1909), taken over by August Wenzinger (1905-1996), and the other by Friedrich Grützmacher (1832-1903).



Ex. 28: Bach, Suite II for Solo Cello, Prelude, bars 59-63 realized by R. Hausmann & A Wenzinger.



Ex. 29: Bach, Suite II for Solo Cello, Prelude, bars 59-63 realized by F. Grützmacher.

6.4 Vibrato

An expressive and varied vibrato is an integral part of the modern cellist's basic sound. Modern cellists are, in general, very aware that the function of vibrato is to enhance and beautify the tone, taking into consideration the vast palette of colours that variation in speed, width and intensity of vibrato can contribute to the 'affect' of the music. The primary difference between the Baroque and modern concept of vibrato is not in its execution but in its function. Although there is much literature that clearly acknowledges the mastery of cellists in the Romantic era, it is the opinion of Christopher Bunting (2000:II, 47) that modern cellists have inherited some bad habits from that period, including the frequent use of vibrato "as an all-purpose varnish laid on thickly over a bad painting to conceal its defects."

Baroque vibrato, referred to by Leopold Mozart (1948[1756]:203-205) as the tremolo, is described in a chapter that describes the mordent and other improvised embellishments. This vibrato is used no more frequently than any other regular embellishment and in the music of certain composers, not including J.S. Bach, vibrato had a sign, as did the other ornaments. Such vibrato was used on particularly expressive tones only, and especially on long notes, in particular those that ended a phrase. Leopold Mozart considered a continuous vibrato to be very undesirable and in bad taste. It is clear that vibrato was not used by orchestral musicians, but only by singers and other soloists.

The concept of Baroque sound often derives its beauty from its simplicity. The seeking out of such beauty in a raw and unadorned form can have a breathtaking effect on a modern cello, particularly because we are now so used to a continuous vibrato (Pleeth, 1994:135-139). I would personally advise any cellist to practise any movement of the Bach Suites slowly and with no vibrato at all, whilst trying to discover the beauty of each and every tone. This should be done by paying special attention to bow speed, pressure and distance from the bridge. Only after the cellist, through a heightened awareness of his bowing, has mastered full control of his sound, should he add the minimum amount of vibrato necessary to convey his interpretation of the music.

CAPTER 7: THE SIXTH SUITE

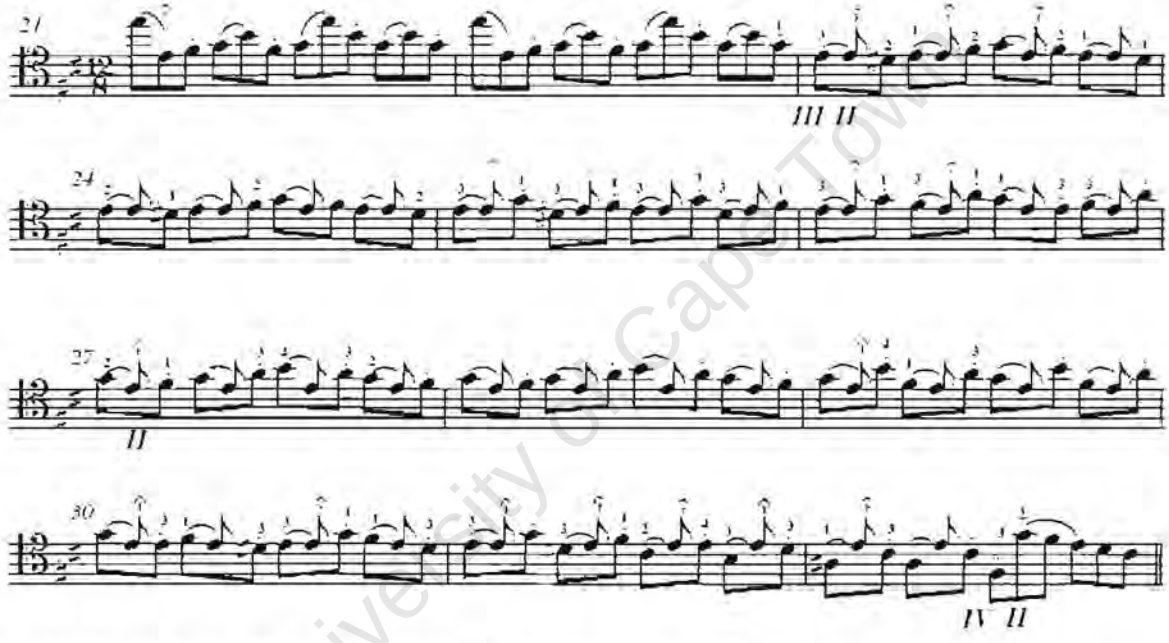
7.1 Introduction

The Sixth Suite was written for a five-stringed instrument, the additional string being an E above the A string.[1] Even on a five-stringed cello, the Sixth Suite would be the most difficult of all six suites to play as it contains more chords, is more complex and is considerably longer than the others. Many of today's great cellists have acquired a five-stringed cello solely for the performance and recording of this suite, but this is beyond the means of most cellists. For those of us with a conventional modern cello, the absence of the E string forces us to frequently, and for sustained periods, play in very high positions. One must also change position a lot and make frequent use of the thumb, all of which is foreign to an informed Baroque style. Susan Sheppard, one of the pioneers of Baroque cello playing in London says that in order to play the Sixth Suite on a conventional cello, "one needs a superlative modern technique" (Laird, 2004:212). It is for this reason that Friedrich Grützmacher (1832-1903) transposed the Sarabande a fifth lower and Erwin Grützbach (1903-1998) transposed the whole suite a fifth lower (Apolin, 1995:12). Neither of these transcriptions has found any popularity with the present generation of cellists. It is the complicated nature of the Sixth Suite, as well as the fact that we need to make special adaptations to the music in order to make it playable on a four-string cello, that makes it necessary to treat it as a separate case study.

[1] Over the years there has been much speculation about the exact instrument for which Bach wrote this suite. The small five-string version of the violoncello piccolo that was played on the arm as well as the Viola Pomposa would have had the range, but are unlikely candidates as music for such instruments would have almost certainly been written in the treble clef exclusively and transposed down an octave. It is, however, entirely conceivable that Bach himself would have played this suite on such an instrument. Kellner's title for the suites contains the words, "Viola de Basso" which could imply a viola type instrument, but this title does not refer exclusively to the Sixth Suite, but rather to the six suites as a whole. Despite the fact that the alto clef is used in addition to the treble and bass clefs in the Sixth Suite, the titles of the other manuscripts contain the word "violoncello" and make no mention of a viola of any kind. It is therefore generally accepted that the Sixth Suite is written for a cello with an E string in addition to the other four strings. This instrument could have been either a normal-sized cello or a large violoncello piccolo held between the knees (Schwemer & Woodfull-Harris, 2000:16-17).

7.2 Prelude

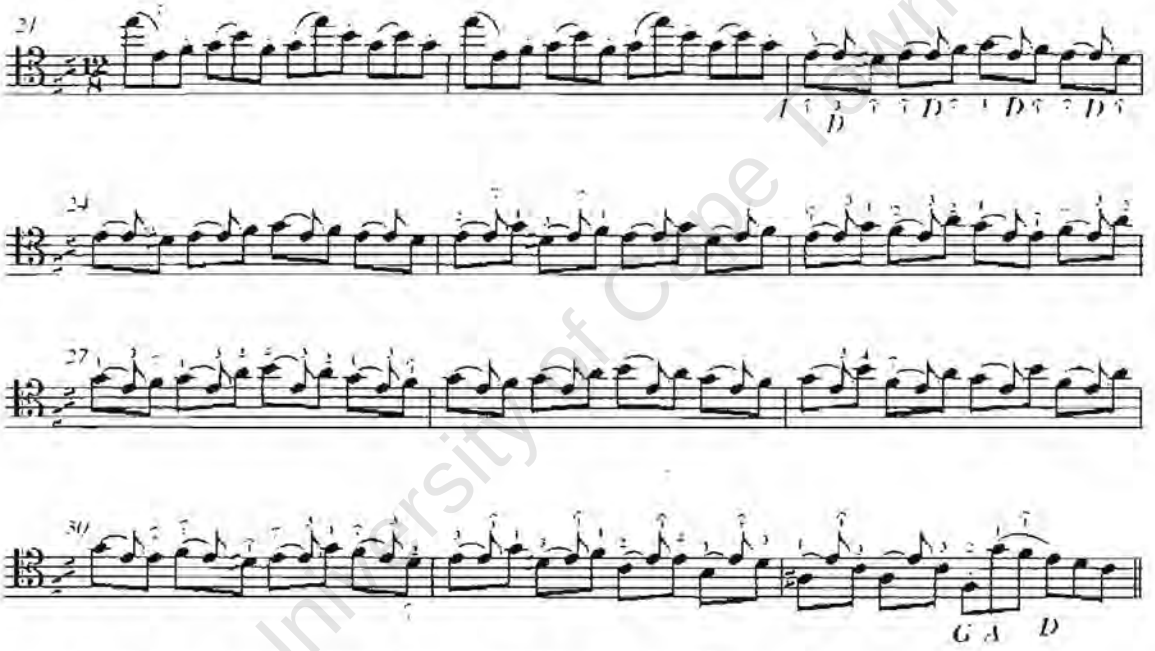
This prelude has the greatest range of any movement of the Bach Cello Suites; it is the only one which requires the performer to go beyond the fourth position on the highest string, despite the fact that the highest string is a fifth higher than on a conventional cello. This severely limits a performer on a normal four-stringed cello as to the diversity of workable fingerings. When considering appropriate fingerings within the context of a stylistically informed interpretation, two passages stand out from the rest. The first involves alternating between the fingered A string and the open E string:



Ex. 30: Bach, Suite VI for Solo Cello, Prelude, bars 21-32.

This fingering, prescribed by Hugo Becker in the 1911 Peters edition of the Bach Suites, is typical of the great Romantic cello school of the early 1900s. It is well-suited to cellists with small hands and those who prefer to conform to a standardized fingering system. The third and fourth strings are clearly prescribed in bars 23 and 24. This is specifically done to avoid a position change on the bar line between bar 22 and 23. Although the use of the fourth finger in thumb position is unconventional, Hugo Becker has chosen this option above that of stretching or expanding the left hand beyond the compass of an octave (between thumb and third finger)

over any two adjacent strings. The thumb is clearly placed on the pitch of the intended open E string, but the choice of doing this on the D string rather than the A string is, in my opinion, problematic. Approximating the sound of a high open E string on the D string cannot be effective as the E is in far too high a position when played on that string. Secondly, playing in very high positions on the lower strings in general does not give one the same clarity as playing in low positions with the use of as many open strings as possible. This acoustical problem, combined with the fact that the fingers need to be so very close together in these high positions on the thicker strings, makes this fingering very difficult for good intonation. I personally do not recommend this fingering, but have included it as aspects of it may be helpful for those with very small hands.

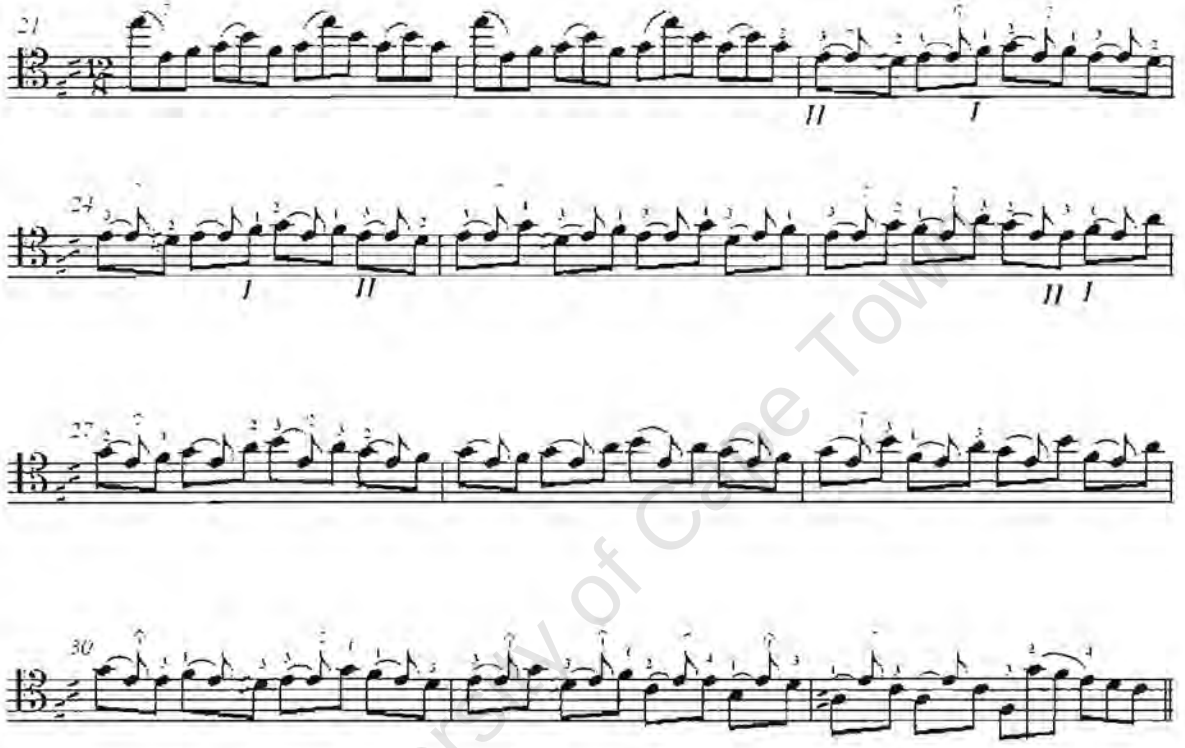


Ex. 31: Bach, Suite VI for Solo Cello, Prelude, bars 21-32.

This fingering, suggested by Stanislav Apolin (1995:23), shows an attempt to play the passage in as low a position as possible so as to obtain the greatest possible clarity. In my opinion, this fingering presents two fundamental problems. In the first place, the use of the thumb as a pivotal point around which the rest of the hand can either remain in set form, or be allowed to expand and contract (Pleeth, 1994:29), cannot work properly when there is so much shifting of the

thumb itself. Secondly, it is clear that the 'E's written with the stems pointing upwards are intended for the open E string and should therefore be played on the highest possible string.

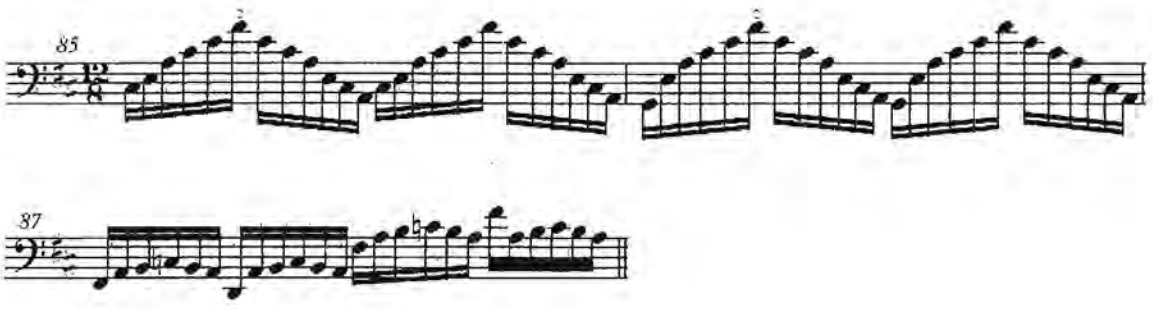
To my mind the following fingering combines the elements of both the afore-mentioned fingerings that best allow the player relatively easy access to all the notes while maintaining a stylistic sound.



Ex. 32: Bach, Suite VI for Solo Cello, Prelude, bars 21-32.

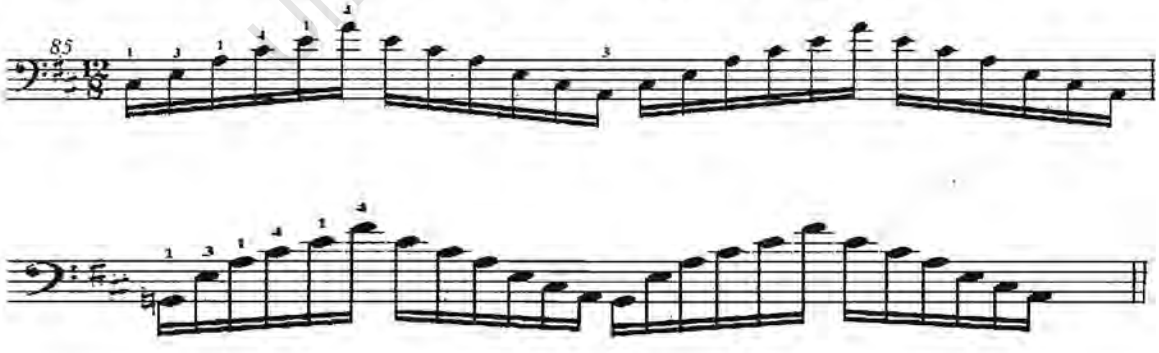
The thumb remains stationary on E on the A string throughout the passage (Bar 23 to 32), thereby creating a kind of artificial open E string. This fingering is possibly not the obvious choice initially, because it requires much extension outside of the normal left hand position. As it is a relatively high position, this is not difficult. The only steadfast rule that the individual performer need apply when selecting his or her personal fingering for this passage is that any two consecutive 'E's that fall under a slur, and that have stems pointing in opposite directions, must be played on different strings. Failure to adhere to this rule would reduce some of the slurs to ties unless the performer changes the bowing that is clearly prescribed in all the manuscripts.

The second potentially problematic passage is this one:



Ex. 33, Bach, Suite VI for Solo Cello, Prelude, bars 85-87.

Although the C string is clearly not needed in the arpeggio passage in bar 85 and 86, it is required for the first note in bar 87. This means that all five strings should be used in quick succession. With only four strings available, the modern cellist usually resorts to using a harmonic on the top A to avoid excessive sliding. The use of harmonics cannot be ruled out in Baroque performance practice altogether, but their use is not required in the Bach Cello Suites with the possible exception of the present one, when played on a four-string cello. Even the eleven examples of virtuoso Baroque cello music examined in Pleeth (1994:238-251) show no evidence of the prescribed use of harmonics or an accepted system of such usage. Stowell (2001:67), in his study on the subject, refers to harmonics as having an inferior tone quality and claims that, as such, they were avoided by Baroque performers. Bunting (2000:II,162-169), on the other hand, includes a detailed chapter on harmonics as a normal part of modern cello technique. One can avoid harmonics in this passage by using the following fingering as demonstrated by Rostropovich in his DVD recording (2004).



Ex. 34: Bach, Suite VI for Solo Cello, Prelude, bars 85-86.

The fingering in ex. 34 is doubtlessly far more difficult to execute than the one using harmonics. Because of the exceptional size of Rostropovich's hands, he has personally been able to reduce all shifts to stretches, thus producing very clean passagework. Even for those with large hands and the capability for unconventional stretching, this fingering is treacherous for intonation, but it is arguably the one that best serves the music.

The bowing for the opening passage is clear and identical in all four manuscripts, but bowing in the rest of the movement is to a large extent a matter of personal choice as the untidy nature of the manuscripts as well as obvious differences in bowing between them, requires the performer to use his or her own initiative to decipher or make up a suitable bowing. Anner Bylsma, arguably the most respected period instrument cellist today, points out that there are three ways to bow such slurred triplets and these are: to slur all three notes, to slur the first two notes or to slur the last two notes. He maintains that interesting combinations of slurring must be used to maintain variety in the music. He urges performers to give little consideration to the 'Down-bow rule', stating that it is predominantly a French tradition that would have been more of an absolute to orchestral players than creative soloists. He also equates a creative Italian style of bowing with the musical language of the suites in general (Liard, 2004:73). These considerations would be equally applicable to the Gigue of Suite IV.

7.3 Allemande

In addition to the title of Allemande, the Kellner manuscript also contains the word *Adagio* and the two unnamed manuscripts contain the words *molto Adagio* [sic.]. Apolin (1995:24) points out that this movement is often performed with a feeling of eight beats to a bar. He feels this is incorrect, as the time signature of 8/8 was not known in the Baroque era.[1] He advises playing with a feeling of broad crotchet beats, treating the many demi-semiquavers and hemi-demi-semiquavers as written out ornamentation.[2] It is my opinion that the very slow tempi heard so often in performances of this movement are influenced to a certain degree by the sheer technical

[1] One should note that although the 8/8 time signature is in use today, it is not an accepted standard for indicating a slow tempo with a regular metre, but rather facilitates the writing of music containing irregular groupings of quavers within an 8/8 bar.

[2] An excellent example of Bach's mastery at writing out ornamentation can be seen in his treatment of the solo part in the Alessandro Marcello Oboe Concerto in D major (Badura-Skoda, 1993:252).

difficulty of the piece. Rothschild (1953:136), however, justifies such tempo choices where the word *Adagio* is specifically used. According to him, the word *Adagio* in the time of Bach was a specific instruction to double the note values or play twice as slow. It is entirely conceivable that *molto Adagio* was specifically used here because the 8/8 time signature did not exist.

The absence of an E string makes the following passage impossible to play with any conventional fingering.

Ex. 35: Bach, Suite for Solo Cello, Allemande, bar 3.

The solution suggested above is my own personal one, but it is inspired by the philosophy proposed in Pleeth (1994:27–28) on exploring new fingerings. In short, he advises every cellist to break out of the conventional left-hand moulds prescribed by textbooks, whilst still acknowledging their value in teaching the basics. One's own hand and one's personal feeling about the music should govern one's fingerings above all else. This particular fingering is a typical example of the importance of release in thumb position playing (Pleeth, 1994:28-30). It is only through adopting this modern attitude to fingering in general that one will be able to play all the chords in this movement.

The modern cellist should be aware that the chord at the beginning of the second half of this movement would have been played with an open E string as the top note. This fact should be taken into consideration by those cellists who, because of the expressive nature of this chord, feel the desire to decorate it with an inappropriate amount of vibrato.

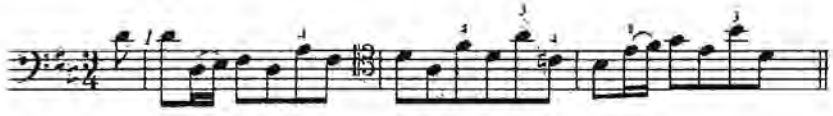
The question of bowing in this movement is a difficult one, because of the long slurs and the slow over-all tempo. The cello's acoustical properties with relation to bow speed, pressure and the point of contact between the bow and the string are discussed in detail in Mantel (1995[1972]:119-135); an understanding of these is, in my opinion, a necessity when deciding to what degree one can deviate from the bowing prescribed in the manuscripts. Playing in higher positions as a result of the missing E string necessitates a higher bow speed, making the already long slurs even more difficult to carry out. One would also naturally employ this higher bow speed in order to maintain a Baroque-type sound that is free of the intensity associated with a modern cello sound. This means that one would be justified in splitting up some of the prescribed bowing in order to maintain a Baroque-inspired sound with a natural musical flow. One would also need to pay special attention to the difference between bow changes that occur in the middle of prescribed slurs and those that occur between them. In conclusion, it is my opinion that a consciously predetermined combination of modern legato bowing and Baroque-inspired phrasing needs to be applied, specifically in this movement.

7.4 Courante

Apart from the range, and therefore the necessity to occasionally play in the higher positions, there are no defining features of this courante that make it any different to the courantes from the other suites. As this courante follows the only really slow allemande in all of the Cello Suites, the performer is under no great pressure to perform this movement uncomfortably fast in order to create a contrast in tempo between the allemande and courante. This is a notable concern in all the other Cello Suites.

I have found two aspects of modern cello technique useful in facilitating a clean and crisp performance of this movement. Firstly, one can apply modern methods of shifting. Christopher Bunting (Volume Two, 2000:75-76) identifies the two types of shifts as the functional and the expressive, otherwise known as the articulated and the Romantic. He cautions against the overwhelming tendency of modern cellists to employ the expressive shift without proper consideration of musical context. He believes that a clean functional shift should be the basis of the modern cellist's shifting technique. Leopold Mozart (1985 [1756]:138) adds another tip for

the facilitation of clean position changes and that is to change position whilst playing an open string so as to avoid any glissando. Consider the following example:



Ex. 36: Bach, Suite VI for Solo Cello, Courante, bars 1-3.

Note that both the first two position changes are directly after open strings. The position change onto the last beats of bar 2 and bar 3 involve a shifting of the first finger into the desired position before putting down the third finger i.e. an articulated or functional shift. Applying this principal rigorously, especially in difficult passages (see ex. 37, bar 40 below), will ensure a clean performance devoid of audible glissandi.

The second aspect of modern cello technique that assists clean playing in these circumstances is the use of a harmonic, either for the entire duration of a note, or towards the end of a note, directly before a shift (Bunting, 2000:II, 169).

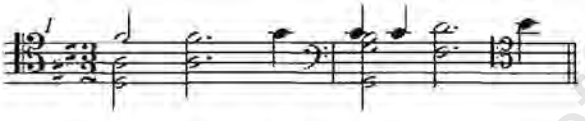
Ex. 37: Bach, Suite VI for Solo Cello, Courante, bars 40-41.

The harmonic on the A in bar 41 allows the performer to release the second finger slightly before the end of the note whilst the nature of the harmonic ensures that the note sounds for its full value. This gives the performer time to lift the hand while lining up the fourth finger for the G. The result is that the G will sound cleanly after the A with no glissando at all. The complete absence of glissandi will most closely reproduce the effect of the first four notes of the bar played on a high E string. It is my experience that special care needs to be taken to avoid making a significant feature of such harmonics. The sole purpose of these harmonics should be to

conceal position changes that are unavoidable due to the absence of the E-string on a conventional modern cello. One needs to bear in mind that the Sixth Suite is no different to the other suites, in so far as they were conceived as performable without the use of harmonics.

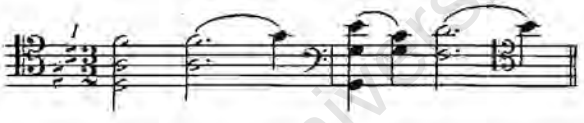
7.5 Sarabande

The vast number of chords, originally intended to incorporate the E string, make this movement problematic. As none of the chords are five-note chords, it is physically possible to play them if one isolates them from the musical context. However, in context, many of them become almost impossible to finger whilst maintaining the musical flow. Many popular editions today contain suggestions for alterations to many of the chords, which in many cases simply involve leaving out a note. As this suite was essentially written for a different instrument, it seems reasonable that any performance on a modern cello must consider the musical line above the inclusion of every single note. Consider the following example:



Original according to Anna Magdalena Bach.

Ex. 38: Bach, Suite VI for Solo Cello, Sarabande, bars 1-2.



Original according to the other manuscripts

Ex. 39: Bach, Suite VI for Solo Cello, Sarabande, bars 1-2.

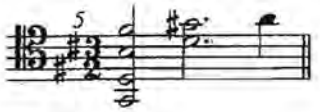
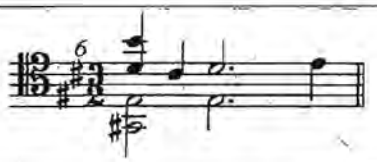
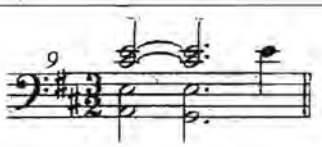
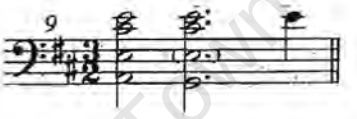
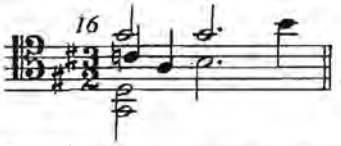
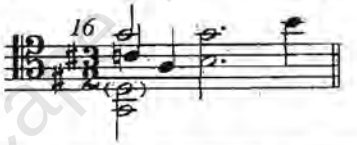
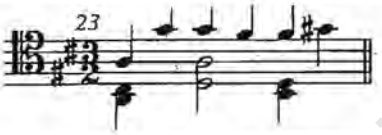
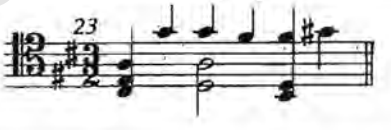
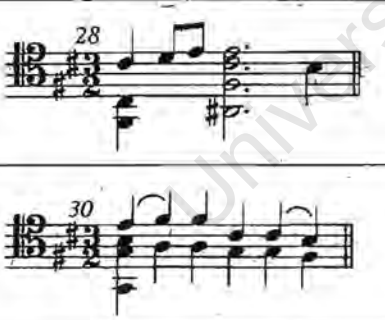
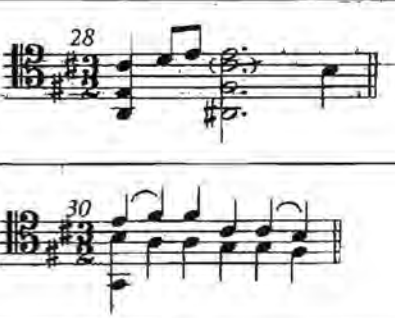
The Anna Magdalena version of the first beat of bar 2 is very difficult to play, as the use of the C string for the bottom note G is both highly impractical and stylistically unsuitable. Having determined that the bottom note is most effective when played as an open G, various options are open to the performer as to the manipulation of the rest of the chord. This is necessary as it is impossible to play a four-note chord whilst omitting the C string. The following solution is suggested in the 2000 Peters edition, carried over from the 1911 Peters edition edited by Hugo Becker.

Ex. 40: Bach, Suite VI for Solo Cello, Sarabande, bar1-2.

As the crotchet rhythm already exists in the upper part, the general rhythm is by no means disturbed by only introducing the upper G to the chord on the second crotchet of the bar. By introducing this rhythm, it is now possible to play both middle notes as written by Anna Magdalena on the D string thereby allowing the bottom note to be played on the open G string as intended and the top voice to be played on the A string.

Although the Peters edition does not follow Anna Magdalena with regard to the melody, one could speculate that Hugo Becker interpreted the C as the top note of the chord to simply be a mistake by Anna Magdalena as it is clearly an E in all the other manuscripts. One could of course choose to ignore the Anna Magdalena chord altogether as the chord presented in the other manuscripts is playable as is, but the richness of harmony that the Anna Magdalena B contributes, is in my opinion, at least worthy of consideration, and would necessitate some form of manipulation of this chord.

Other chords that have been manipulated by various editors through the ages include the following:[1]

Original according to Anna Magdalena Bach	Typical editorial solution
	
	
	
	
	
	

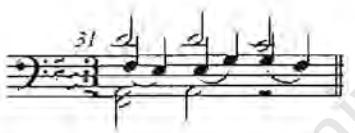
[1] The solutions have been extrapolated from the following editions: Becker (1911), Such (1919), Alexanian (1927), Tortelier (1966), Starker (1970), Fournier (1972), Rubartd (2000). The following editions were also consulted, but offered no solutions to the specific difficulties attributable to the playing of these chords in context on a normal four-stringed cello: Mainardi (1941), Wenzinger (1950), Dover (1988), Leisinger (2000) and Schwemer & Woodfull-Harris (2000).

The 2000 Schwemer & Woodfull-Harris edition published by Bärenreiter, does not offer modern solutions to the problems presented by these chords, but it does detail the differences between the four manuscripts. Also, in some cases, a different chord presented in one of the other manuscripts can inspire a solution to a difficult chord presented in the Anna Magdalena manuscript. It is interesting to note that the four different manuscripts each offer four completely different chords for the first beat of bar 31:

(a) 

(b) 

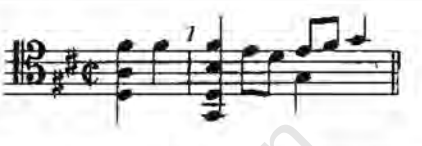
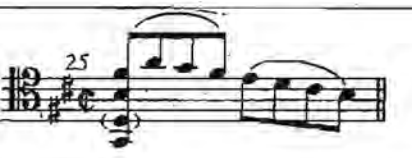
(c) 

(d) 

Ex. 41: Bach, Suite VI for Solo Cello, Sarabande, bar 31. (a) Anna Magdalena MS; (b) Kellner MS; (c) UMS 1; (d) UMS 2.

7.6 Gavotte I and II

Gavottes I and II also contain problems associated with chords which are playable, but, in context, are not practical on a normal four-string cello. These, however, are far fewer than in the Sarabande. The following basic solutions emerge if one consults the various editions as used for the seeking of solutions for similar problems in the Sarabande:

Original according to Anna Magdalena Bach	Typical editorial solution
	
	
	
	
	

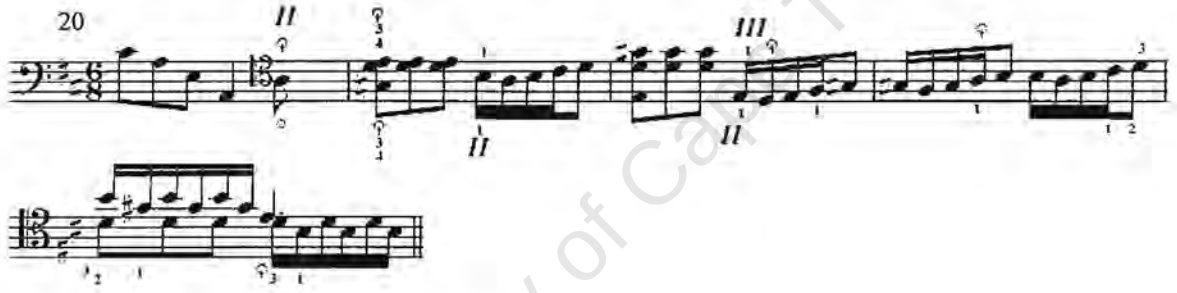
The solutions suggested for bars 1 and 2 are obviously also applicable to bars 21 and 22 respectively.

It may be useful to note that the first chord in bar 1 (and all its subsequent recurrences) can be played in two different ways. The two lowest notes can be played on the C and G strings, thus enabling the normal manner of playing Baroque chords. Alternatively, the bottom two notes can

be played as open strings, which means that the D will be cut short as soon as the B played on the D string is added. The open strings give the chord a ringing over-all sonority, which in my opinion is better suited to the musical style. The use of open strings is recommended as a stylistically correct practice for the modern cellist in Baroque performance (Apolin, 1995:80), and would have definitely been a feature of this chord specifically, as the top two notes are clearly written for the A and E strings.

7.7 Gigue

The Gigue contains a few very awkward fingering problems, but, in my experience, an understanding of modern shifting techniques as well as the use of harmonics in shifting, as discussed in 7.4, does alleviate some of the difficulty.



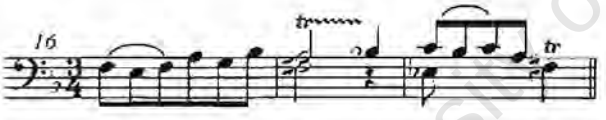
Ex. 42: Bach, Suite VI for Solo Cello, Gigue, bars 20-24.

A study of the afore-mentioned editions reveals two attitudes towards the fingering of this passage. The fingering notated above the music should be played in one position using the thumb to create a 'new artificial set of open strings' a fifth above the strings on which they are played. The fingering notated below the music involves shifting to first position on the D string in the middle of bar 22. The two fingerings satisfy different requirements for the stylistic performance of the passage, but neither does so fully. Whether one chooses the stability of the stationary thumb, thereby minimizing position changes, or making use of the lower positions where one can, in order to maximize clarity, is a personal matter. The choice in this case will not necessarily be a stylistic one, but a personal and practical one.

Cellists are faced with an interesting dilemma with the trill in bar 52:

Ex. 43: Bach, Suite VI for Solo Cello, Gigue, bar 52.

As the trill is potentially on the open A string, the performer finds a conflict in the rules of the Baroque. Leopold Mozart (1948[1756]:190) states that a trill should never be played between the open string and the first finger. However, as all the other notes around this trill are indeed on the A string, it would be negligent not to consider the option of trilling on the open string. J.S. Bach may well have envisaged this trill on an open A as the trill prescribed in all four manuscripts in bar 17 in the Menuet I from Suite II (see Ex. 44) would have almost certainly been played on the open A string, considering that the F sharp, when played on the D string, prevents the trill from being played any other way. The alternative of playing this double stop with the trill on the upper note on the D string and the lower note on the G string would be very uncharacteristic if one considers the use of lower positions to be the norm.



Ex. 44: Bach, Suite II for Solo Cello, Menuet I, bars 16-18.

Trills on open strings are not specifically forbidden in the modern literature and I maintain that an open string trill, however unusual, can be very effective in this place. If one chooses the conventional option of playing this trill on the D string, one should play as close as possible to the bridge, while avoiding a *sul ponticello* effect, so as to get as close as possible to the nasal qualities of the A string.[1]

[1] See Mantel (1995[1972]:119-135) on the relationship between bow speed, pressure and point of contact as this relates to tone quality as discussed in 7.3.

In conclusion, an in-depth study of the Sixth Suite may create more questions than it answers. The technical difficulty, beauty and musical genius of this supreme masterpiece beckon and threaten even the greatest of cellists. In a recent article for *The Strad* magazine, Steven Isserlis (2007:50-53), discussed his preparation of the suites for his CD recording and said, "Playing the Bach suites is rather like having a child: one can never feel prepared or adequate to the task." This is especially true of the Sixth Suite, and he singles it out as having presented him with enormous problems.

CHAPTER 8: A SURVEY OF DIFFERENT EDITIONS OF THE BACH CELLO SUITES

8.1 Introduction

A survey of the editions of the Bach Cello Suites by Tim Janof (1995) for the Internet Cello Society refers to the existence of over 80 editions of the Bach Cello Suites; a similar, but slightly later article by Dimitry Markevitch (2000) confirms the existence of 92 editions! Almost all of history's great cellists have made their own editions of the Bach suites and every student thereof has, to some extent, added their own markings. As a result, Janof suggests there are as many editions of the Bach Suites as there are cellists who have played them.

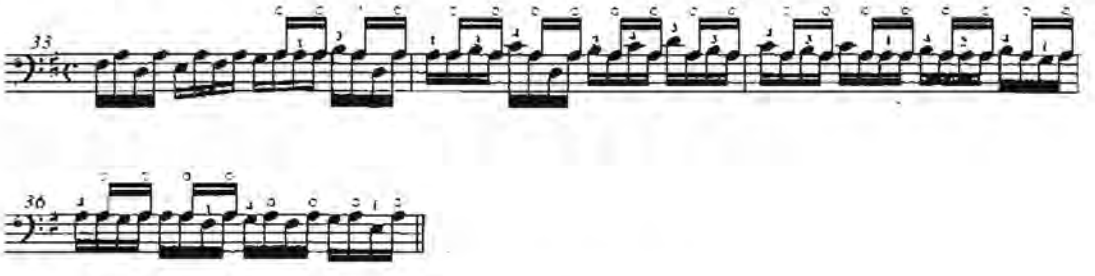
The first question that students embarking on a relationship with the Bach Cello suites are faced with is which edition to buy. The fact that so many editions exist does not make the decision easier. Janof (1995) warns that although many informed studies have influenced the editorial markings in some of the editions, many of the editions simply convey the playing style of the era in which they were published. Others seem to have been used as a vehicle for famous cellists to make their personal mark in the hope that their ideas would become integrated into the legacy that this music has become. It is my opinion that the great cellists of history have indeed played a valuable role in shaping interpretative standards for the music of various eras. It follows that a study of various editions of the Bach suites can go a long way to helping us understand the wealth of opinions and ideas available to the performer.

Janof (1995) points out that the study of all the finer details of all available editions is neither practical nor necessary. I have therefore made a selection in terms of editions and points of discussion and/or comparison.

8.2 The First Edition

The first edition was published by Janet et Cotelle in Paris in or around 1824 under the title, *Six Sonates ou Etudes Pour le Violoncelle Solo (Six Sonatas or Studies for Violoncello Solo)*. This title suggests that perhaps the cellists of the day regarded these pieces to have been composed with particular didactic intention. The well-known cellist, Pierre Norblin (1781-1854), is credited in the preface and it is claimed that he discovered a manuscript after a lengthy search (Schwemer & Woodfull-Harris, 2000:5-8).

Although this 1824 edition officially belongs to the era of post-Baroque instruments, it is conceivably much nearer to the interpretative norms of Bach's day than the lush sound and continuous vibrato characteristic of cello playing in the later 1800s and much of the 1900s. It was only in the late 1820s that the development of a true Romanic cello playing style started, largely as a result of the advent of the Tourte-design bow (Stowell, 2004:179). One can therefore derive useful information about articulation and appropriate colours of sound if one studies the fingerings and bowings in this edition. At the outset, one is drawn to the bowing in the Prelude of Suite I that, with the exception of the scales in bars 29 and 30, requires no more that four notes per bow throughout. The deliberate absence of slurs in many places and the combining of short slurs with separately articulated passagework, in my opinion, implies a more textured and less stagnant and legato approach than is often presented today. The fingering in bars 33-36 shows a witty play between the A and D strings, making full use of the open A string rather than concealing its sometimes blatant quality by fingering the note on the D string.

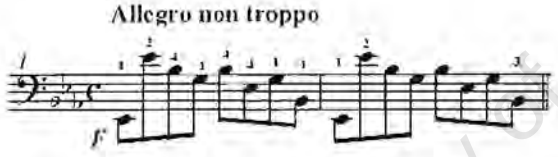


Ex. 45: Bach, Suite I for Solo Cello, Prelude, bars 33-36.

This is in contrast to the appreciation of the uniformity of tone colour of a passage played entirely on the D string.

Ex. 46: Bach, Suite I for Solo Cello, Prelude, bars 26-27.

The detailed fingering given at the beginning of the Prelude of Suite IV would naturally be executed in a detached manner as the consecutive fourth fingers and the consecutive first fingers in bar 1 are difficult to play legato: The first finger prescribed at the beginning of bar 2 results in three first fingers in a row, and as the first two are not a fifth apart, it is impossible to play them legato. This ties in nicely with much of the instruction presented in many of the old treatise regarding the articulation of non-slurred passages (Schwemer & Woodfull-Harris, 2000:21-22).



Ex. 47: Bach, Suite IV for Solo Cello, Prelude, bars 1-2.

The first finger prescribed at the beginning of bar 2 results in three first fingers in a row, and as the first two are not a fifth apart, it is impossible to play them legato. This ties in nicely with much of the instruction presented in many of the old treatise regarding the articulation of non-slurred passages (Schwemer & Woodfull-Harris, 2000:21-22).

The rest of the material in this edition seems to be treated with a similar sensitivity towards what we would today consider to be informed Baroque practice. It is interesting to note that the Bourées in Suites III and IV are referred to as "Loures" in this edition.

Suite V is only notated in its original form with scordatura, which implies that it would have been the norm in around 1824 for cellists to tune the A string down to a G as prescribed by Bach. This possibly also reinforces the belief of those who feel that playing this suite with conventional tuning is too far removed from the sonority that Bach intended and it should therefore only be played with the prescribed Bach tuning. This edition, therefore, would be problematic for many a modern cellist who prefers to stick to the conventional cello tuning.

Suite VI, on the other hand, is presented with no mention of the five-string cello for which it was intended and the fingerings clearly indicate the use of a four-string cello. The symbol for open string (0) also denotes the use of the thumb in addition to the open strings. An old-fashioned system of notation for cello music in a high register is also used. This system, common in manuscripts of Beethoven and Dvořák, requires the cellist to transpose the treble clef an octave down. It was developed in around 1760 by French players who wished to make solo cello music accessible to violinists as well (Stowell, 2004:180). This is also problematic for cellists of today who are accustomed to reading treble clef at pitch.

8.3 Other Editions before 1950

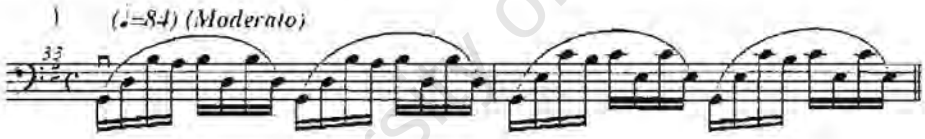
According to Diran Alexanian (1927:iii-iv), important editions published between 1824 and 1910 include the following:

- unknown editor (H-A Probst ,1825)
- F. Dotzauer (Breitkopf & Härtel, 1826)
- F. Grützmacher (Breitkopf & Härtel 1866)
- Bachgesellschaft (Breitkopf & Härtel, 1879)
- N. Salter (Shimrock, 1897)
- R. Haussmann (Steingräbet, 1898)
- J. Klengel (Breitkopf & Härtel, 1900)
- J. van Lier (Universal Edition, 1907)

It is interesting to note that August Wenzinger (1950:1) also lists these editions as being amongst the most important. In addition to some of those published before 1950 that are detailed in this chapter, Wenzinger also lists as important the following editions, published between 1910 and 1950:

- F. Pollain (Durand, 1918)
- C. Liégois (Lemoine, 1919)
- E. Kurth (Franz Steiner Verlag, 1921)
- L. Forino (Ricordi, 1924)
- P. Bazelaire (Eiching, 1933)
- P. Grümmer (Doblinger, 1944)

The Peters edition edited by Hugo Becker in1911 has proved popular and has therefore been reprinted several times. The bowings and fingerings reflect the typical Romantic tendencies of the early 1990s which means that this edition has little to offer the conscientious modern cellist.



Ex. 48: Bach, Suite I for Solo Cello, Prelude, bars 1-2.

Certain of the printed notes are questionable, but as the four available manuscripts differ in many places, arguments can be made for almost everything that is printed in this edition, with the exception of the 1st B flat in the ex. 49 below.

Ex. 49: Bach, Suite I for Solo Cello, Prelude, bars 26-27.

In all four manuscripts the 10th note in bar 26 is a B natural, and the B flat only applies as from the 12th note.

The error has its origin in the Bachgesellschaft edition published by Breitkopf & Härtel in1879 and has not only been transferred to the Becker edition, but also (amongst others) to the Wenzinger, Starker and the Dover editions.

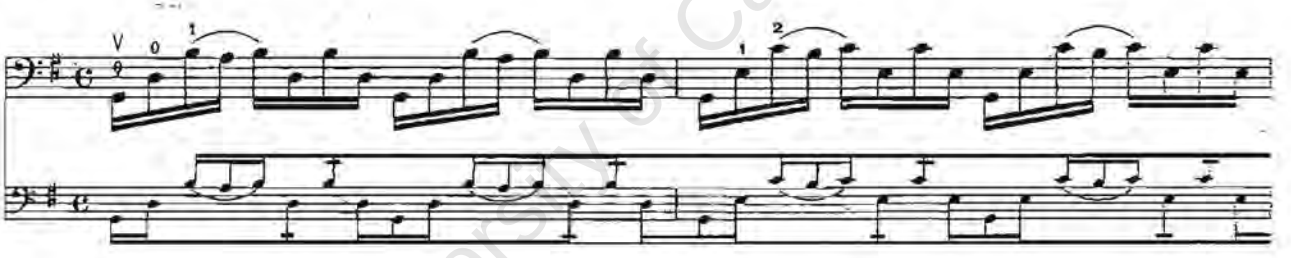
Suite V is printed on two staves, the upper in the original scordatura tuning and the lower in notation for conventional tuning. This is very useful for the student who wishes to see clearly all the necessary amendments to chords, etc, but it results in an unavoidable page turn in the middle of the Prelude. Suite VI is printed with chords that are reasonably manageable on a conventional four-string cello, with plenty of alternative and original versions offered as footnotes.

The edition by Such (Augener, 1919) is remarkably pure for its time and as such can still be used by today's cellists who are interested in a stylistically informed performance. Modest and stylistic bowings are prescribed throughout, and, for the most part, appropriate fingerings are prescribed with liberal use of open strings, particularly in the Prelude of Suite III. Suite V is printed on two staves, using a smaller notation for the lower part for conventional tuning. Unavoidable page turns are problematic in the Preludes of both Suite V and VI. A sensible alternative is printed for every chord in Suite VI that is awkward or unmanageable, but in every case, an original chord is printed below the stave. The editor's philosophy is stated in the preface as follows, "... all marks of expression [so often added by the editor] have been omitted... So many and varied are the readings of these Suites that the Editor thinks it better to leave the rendering to the taste and individuality of the performer and teacher."

The edition by Alexanian (Editions Francis Salabert, 1927) is a thought-provoking analysis of phrasing, articulation and implied harmonic structure. It is impractical as an edition to perform from as Alexanian has invented a completely revised notation system in order to convey musical nuances including beginnings and endings of syllables as he

sees them. This emphasis on accentuation and relaxation as related to a spoken language ties in nicely with present day research on Baroque interpretation (see: Stowell, 2001:91-95), but the visual impact of additional stems and tails is in my experience quite disconcerting. To complicate matters further, he has added copious instructions to the score as to bowing, fingering and choice of string. This edition contains a preface explaining at length the notation system used and a copy of the Anna Magdalena manuscript.

The edition by Mainardi (Schott, 1941) is an honest attempt to do justice to Baroque style whilst making use of the technique common to the Romantic cello school. In the introduction, Mainardi refers to arpeggiated chords, trilling from the upper note and avoiding too much rubato. He also acknowledges that, despite the fact that Bach has written a single line for solo cello, he is a master of polyphonic writing and a proper appreciation of this music is only possible when one identifies the different voices that make up this single line. This music thus contains an additional stave below the normally printed music on which the music is reprinted in a way that clearly differentiates between two different voices, by employing stems pointing in opposite directions.



Ex. 50: Bach, Suite I for Solo Cello, Prelude, bars 1-3, Mainardi edition.

The double stave system makes this an awkward edition to play from, but the analytical content is most interesting. The fact that no original scordatura printing of Suite V exists in this edition may point to a growing general tendency amongst cellists in the mid-1900s to prefer conventional tuning despite the clear instruction for the use of scordatura in the sources. Mainardi indicates in the introduction that the altered pitch of the A string would compromise the balanced tone of the instrument, but the creation of an altered timbre was clearly Bach's intention!

8.4 Editions from 1950 to the Present

The year 1950 is significant in that it is the year in which the first Urtext edition still commonly in use today was first published. As such, this represents a watershed in terms of authenticity. This edition by Wenzinger (Bärenreiter, 1950) has also been reprinted countless times. This is not surprising when considering its clear, well-spaced print and claims of authenticity. Slurs, other than those derived from the Anna Magdalena or Kellner manuscripts used to prepare this edition, are included with dotted lines and these are added sparingly to link parallel passages or logically continue an obvious pattern.

Ex. 51: Bach, Suite II for Solo Cello, Prelude, bars 7-9.

Of all the editions studied in this thesis, this Bärenreiter edition is the first to publish two separate versions of Suite V, one in original notation (i.e. with scordatura), and one for conventional tuning. It is my personal experience that this is by far the better printing option for easy reading. The editor expects the modern cellist to cope with the difficulties of Suite VI and no alternatives are offered for very awkward chords. The edition includes a critical report detailing inconsistencies in and differences between the sources.

The edition by Markevitch (Presser, 1964) is according to Tim Janof (1995), one of the most interesting editions available. Markevitch is a noted scholar on the Bach suites and is presently working on his second edition that he claims will be edition number 93 (Markevitch, 2000)! His 1964 edition is based on three of the available manuscripts, of these Anna Magdalena and Kellner, and the UMS 1 attributable possibly to Westphal. This edition has a detailed preface, discussing amongst other things, research of the sources and appropriate performance practice. This edition contains virtually no fingerings except in some very difficult passages.

The bowing shows an understanding of style, particularly in the sarabandes, where the prescription of an up-bow for most of the starts enables the performer to easily stress the more important second beat that would fall on the naturally stronger down- bow.

Ex. 52: Bach, Suite I for Solo Cello, Sarabande, bars 1-2.

In addition to these musically understandable up-bow starts, he has also included a number of other up-bow starts, as, for example, at the beginning of the Prelude of Suite VI. I personally view this as a somewhat awkward, but workable peculiarity of Markevitch with no basis in authentic performance practice.

The edition by Rubardt (Peters, 1965) carries the red Urtext tag that has only recently become a trademark of a select few Peters Edition scores. It is my personal choice for performance as the clear print and total absence of any page-turns in the middle of movements make this a very easy edition to play from. There are no fingerings or extraneous expression marks to clutter the score and the modest and stylistic bowing, inspired by the original manuscripts, have been carefully edited to remove inconsistencies and appear logical throughout. The wrong note in bar 26 of the Prelude in Suite I (see ex. 49) in the 1911 Peters edition has been corrected. The editor does not seem to have favoured one source over another, but has rather selected the more conventional-sounding option where the sources have differed. Both Suites V and VI have been printed in the original way (ie. Suite V with scordatura and Suite VI predominantly in the alto and bass clefs with some use of a soprano clef for the high material in the Prelude). At the end of the volume is a detailed list of inconsistencies between the sources that pertains to all six suites. A separate insert contains Suites V and VI printed for modern players in the normal tuning and clefs.

The edition by Tortelier (Augener 1966) is a good example of an edition that serves primarily as a vehicle for an individual to put his personal stamp on this music. The fingerings are relatively standard, with a good deal of stretching prescribed. This is the only aspect of this edition that shows some stylistic consideration. The frequent use of harmonics however is typical of the Romantic era. The bowing has nothing to do with the original and is typical of the largely legato style that characterized so many uninformed Bach performances of the 1960s and 70s. The music is also adorned by copious unconventional signs designed to detail all the finer nuances proposed by Tortelier. For the modern cellist interested in authentic Bach interpretation, this edition has virtually nothing to offer.

In the foreword of the edition by Starker (Peer International Corporation, 1971), he briefly gives an informed explanation on certain aspects of Baroque playing including the execution of trills and chords, but claims no expertise on the matter. This is definitely another personally stamped edition, but this time the editor is quite frank about his intentions. He writes, " Perhaps the main benefit of this edition will be that if my recorded or performed versions of these Suites coincide with the player's taste, then the mechanical means described herein will be of help. In short I claim nothing else but the fact that most of the time this is the way I play these masterpieces." Although the bowings are more varied and therefore possibly slightly more typically Baroque than the Tortelier edition, this is in my opinion essentially another Romantic edition to be avoided.

The edition by Fournier (International Music Company, 1972) is yet another example of an individualistic Romanic approach. Fournier writes, " The principal aim of the present edition is to offer a version which takes into account modern cello technique, especially the technique of the bow which, in my opinion is an essential factor in musical phrasing and rhythmical equilibrium of interpretation." This "modern" bow technique is perfectly suited to the production of a big Romantic sound and in particular to legato playing and renders this edition, like the previous two, completely unhelpful in our quest to better understand the musical language of Bach's time. As with the Starker and Tortelier edition, this edition makes no mention of the scordatura originally prescribed for Suite V, the implication being

that maintaining the powerful and well-balanced modern cello sound had become more important by 1972 than honouring an instruction by Bach that would compromise this.

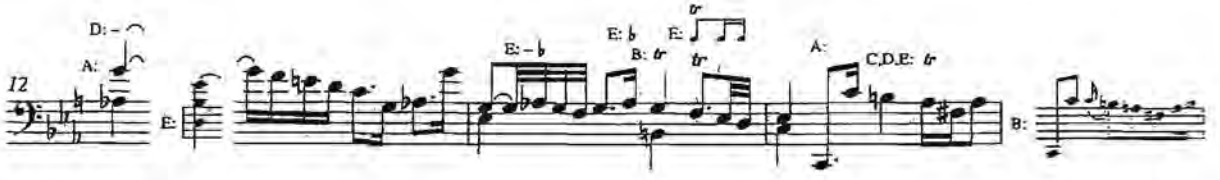
The 1988 Dover Edition score couples the unaccompanied Cello Suites with the three Sonatas for viola da gamba and keyboard. The Cello Suites are reprinted in this edition from the definitive Bach-Gesellschaft edition published by Breitkopf & Härtel in 1879. It contains stylistic and logical bowings and is devoid of fingerings. The print is less clear than many of the other editions, but, this edition in my opinion, is still valuable study material. Suites V and VI are printed in their original form as in the 1965 Peters Edition and the alternative versions for modern cellists with conventional tuning and in bass, tenor and treble clefs appear as an appendix.

The Wiener Urtext edition published by Schott/Universal in 2000 with commentary and notes on interpretation by Ulrich Leisinger is clearly the result of detailed research.[1] What makes this edition different to all the others is the fact that it is based primarily on the two later unnamed manuscripts rather than the Anna Magdalena and/or Kellner manuscripts that seem to form the basis of virtually all research when it comes to most other editions.[2] The result is a very clear and practical edition that can be used effectively for both study and performance. Suite V is printed first in original notation and then in the version for normal tuning. As the print spacing is big, page turns are avoided by means of fold-outs.

The 2000 Bärenreiter Scholarly Critical Performing Edition is in my opinion the ultimate study edition for those modern cellists interested in Baroque performance practice. The various books that make up this edition include copies of all four original manuscripts, the 1824 first printed edition, a text volume and a modern printing of the music itself. The text

[1] The notes and commentary make up a 24-page book that is separate from the printed music and it contains notes on the sources, interpretation and a critical report on differences between the sources.
[2] The editor has adopted this line of research for several reasons. It is his opinion that if one makes a study of the Anna Magdalena copy of the Bach Sonatas and Partitas for solo violin and compares this to the Bach original, one will find that she is not an accurate copyist. Furthermore her ignorance in the field of stringed instruments becomes very evident. One major problem with the Kellner manuscript is that the Fifth Suite is incomplete in that the Gigue breaks off after the first few bars and the Sarabande is missing altogether. Kellner has also not indicated the use of scordatura, rather notating the entire suite at pitch (Leisinger, 2000:3-5).

volume details many aspects of Baroque performance practice as well as giving a detailed history of the Baroque dance suite in general and the Bach Cello Suites in particular. The text volume also explains the system of notation developed to include all variants that the sources may offer for any one particular passage.



Ex.53: Bach, Suite V for Solo Cello, Allemand, bar 12-14, 2000 Bärenreiter edition (version for standard tuning).

A refers to the Anna Magdalena manuscript, B to Kellner, C and D to the UMS 1 and the UMS 2 respectively and E to the 1824 first printed edition. This edition may well be the most comprehensive study material available, but the abundance of different options for any given passage makes this edition difficult to play from. It is completely devoid of bowings and fingerings, the assumption being that the editors have provided more than enough information in the text volume and copies of the manuscripts for the performer to create his or her own bowings and fingerings.

I have deliberately avoided making a comparison of all differences between the above editions, especially where they differ in terms of notes, as the availability of the different sources in the 2000 Bärenreiter edition coupled with the extensive text volume give the conscientious modern cellist more that enough data to make informed decisions. Furthermore, this laborious analytical exercise does little to enhance one's overall understanding of these great works. The fact that one cellist may choose one note over another is hardly going to detract from or enhance the use of appropriate style.

One passage, however, has been the subject of much debate over the years and arguments for both interpretations are still ongoing.

Ex. 54: Suite IV for Solo Cello, Prelude, bars 80-82.

The argument is whether the written B flats in the third beat of bar 80 should be interpreted as B flats or B double flats.

The majority of modern editions and the even more overwhelming majority of recordings make use of B double flat with the notable exception of Anner Bylsma. As a B flat already exists in the key signature, the correct scholarly interpretation seems to indicate that the flat written before the note should be realized as a double flat. The result is very pleasant sounding, but implies an unlikely momentary modulation to F flat major.

The argument for the use of B flat is based on the function of the F flat chord as Neapolitan sixth that precedes the perfect cadence from the end of bar 81 to bar 82. The tension that is created by the B flat in the passage work in bar 80 against the supertonic chord in first inversion, and that is resolved in the perfect cadence that follows, can only be appreciated if one does not imply a modulation to F flat major by choosing a B double flat.

Unfortunately no similar passage that can be used for the purpose of comparison occurs in any other movement of the Cello Suites.[1] Differing interpretations of certain notes will continue to be a character trait of editions to come as long as valid harmonic justification for any particular printed note, as taken from one of the manuscripts, exists.

[1] A similar passage occurs in Das Wohltemperierte Klavier Book I Prelude VIII (bar 26) (Bärenreiter, 1989:39) where Bach specifically notates the B with a double flat. This notation supports the argument to play a B flat in the Cello Suite. On the other hand, the B double flat in the keyboard work also occurs against a Neopolitan sixth on A flat, but as the key here is E flat minor, the momentary modulation to F flat is less extreme.

With the exception of the edition by Maisky (Schott, 1999), that is now also available as a pluscore on his CD released by Deutsche Grammophon (Markevitch, 2000), the age of enlightenment seems to have firmly set in. The recent spate of "Urtext" editions has helped performers and teachers alike in understanding, in an unadulterated way, the works of the great masters. They have also gone a long way in furthering the quest for authenticity and greater knowledge.

Conclusion

In the preface to his edition of the Cello Suites, Starker (1970) states, "One of the certain signs of a masterpiece is its ability to withstand presentations of all kinds and still remain a masterpiece." The multitude of editions, recordings, books and essays on the Bach Cello Suites are testimony to the multitude of opinions which exist regarding their interpretation.

That we ask so many questions does not always mean that we will find the answers, but it shows a healthy respect for the subject and a desire for knowledge in our quest to honour the great composers of the Baroque era. Paul Laird (2004) uses over 300 pages to delve into the question of what constitutes a Baroque cello and after much researched historical background, interviews with established soloists and pioneers alike and thoroughly conducted surveys, the answer still remains elusive. Beyond the basics of a Baroque bridge, gut strings and an appropriate bow, many variables still remain undefined. Nevertheless the accumulated research on the subject allows us to a large extent to satisfy the desire to respectfully serve the great composers of the Baroque era. The concept of the Baroque cello can be found "inside the fingers, hands and minds" of those with a craving for the Baroque sound (Laird, 2004:328-329).

This sound is inextricably linked to the instruments of the Baroque period, but in-depth research into the playing style of the Baroque and the instruments themselves have given us the information we need to capture the essence of this sound on our modern instruments. Laird (2004:331-332) points out, after hearing *Les Violons du Roy* in concert, that one is totally convinced that the effective reproduction of true Baroque style lies in the attitude of the performers rather than the possession of specialist equipment.

Pleeth (1994:135-144) is not only convinced that Baroque cello music can effectively be played on a modern instrument, but he is also convinced of the necessity to do so. He recommends the study of historical background and discovery through the acquisition and study of uncorrupted editions. He brings to our attention the range of expression in early music, which is no less vast than that attributed to any other period in music. In order to convey with maximum effect the full palette of emotions contained within the

musical language of the Baroque, a specific and considered style of playing, especially in terms of bowing, needs to be adopted. According to Pleeth, "It is only this kind of understanding that can guide one to the right sound for a particular era of music – whether one plays on 'modern' or 'authentic' instruments."

Far more important than the details of methods of execution and in particular, arguments about the appropriateness of one particular method versus another, is the desire to do justice to the composer. Without a respect and admiration for the genius of J.S. Bach, no performance of the six Cello Suites or part thereof will sound inspired or convincing regardless of the authenticity of the performance. In the words of William Pleeth (1994: 2), "The spirit of the music is the only thing that can rightfully dictate physical action on the cello."

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